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# CLYTEMNESTRA.

AND

POEMS LYRICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE.

BY

OWEN MEREDITH.

*NEW EDITION.*

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THE AUTHOR OF THESE BOYISH VERSES WOULD NOT NOW  
PRESUME TO DEDICATE THEM TO

THE HISTORIAN OF  
THE GRAND REMONSTRANCE AND ARREST  
OF ELIOT AND THE STATESMEN OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

IF THE GREATER PART OF THEM HAD NOT, WHEN FIRST PUBLISHED,  
BEEN ALREADY IN TOKEN OF A LIFE'S AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE  
INSCRIBED WITH THE HONOURED NAME OF

JOHN FORSTER.



## P R E F A C E.

NEARLY all the verses here collected have already been before the public, in two volumes; one of which, entitled "Clytemnestra, and other Poems," was published in 1855, and has long been out of print; the other, entitled "The Wanderer," in 1857.

In revising these verses, I have been careful to correct them rather as little, than as much, as possible. Not because I am either indifferent to the imperfection of them, or without reverence for the public to whose notice they are now again submitted; but because I believe that, in literature, new constructions are better than reconstructions, and think that one work can only be adequately corrected by another work. A man should be altogether in his work while he is about it, and altogether out of his work, and beyond his work, when he has done it. He that is honestly labouring to improve *himself* can scarcely, I think, be too sparing of retrospective labour spent in the improvement of any piece of his previous workmanship that has already left the workshop. For on such workmanship the whole man ought no longer to be engaged. Let him try to better what he is: he cannot better what he has been. A writer ill employs the careful penmanship of later years in the interpolation of any

record of his earlier personality to which the signature of his youth has been publicly subscribed. He is like a man trying to forge his own handwriting. Early verses especially,—are they not a sort of early love-letters? Youth's first wooings of life and nature? Years after they were written they cannot be scratched, scraped, and trimmed, without being falsified. Whatever may be the defects of them, they are best left as they are, with even the blots of haste upon them. New experience demands new utterance; new passion new expression.

These verses, then, though reprinted, have not been re-written. All previously published verse which could not be sufficiently corrected without being new-cast is now withdrawn from print; and for this reason only a few of the verses published in 1857 reappear in the present collection. Such alteration as will be found in those that are retained has been made with no other view than to give increased accuracy to their expression of what they were first meant to express. In this view, I have altogether altered the rhythm of one short poem, and have slightly altered the wording of some others. I have changed the essential character of none.

It is possible that castigation far more rigorous than that to which I have felt myself at liberty to subject these verses, would not have expelled from the character of them all the vices of immature composition. Of such vices the worst is repetition of what has been said before by other writers. This, however, is the defect with which I have been chiefly careful to deal in selecting from previous publica-

tions materials for the present collection ; and, if little has been altered, very much has been discarded.

Another consideration has guided, and greatly restricted, the selection of those verses now reprinted from the volume published in 1857.

It has been well said that, if poetry be the universal history of man's heart, lyric poetry is the daily journal of it. Lyric poetry chronicles the ever-varying temperature of the emotions ; the hopes of the morning, the lassitude of noon, the reveries of eve ; and the lyric poet is the comrade of the follies and the weaknesses, the hopes and fears, of daily life. Thoughts can be stored, and coördinated, for the tardy utterance of discreet deliberation ; but emotions are a luxury which must be consumed in its freshness. The purely emotional song of a lyric poet, therefore, will alternate in tone with a rapidity proportioned to the sensitiveness with which his harp responds to the varying pressure of the human pulse upon its strings. Sustained serenity of sentiment, inflexible uniformity of tone, are the last things that should be exacted from such a poet. And such a poet, whose songs are echoes of the beatings of his heart, cannot in after years improve the expression of his past emotions ; because he cannot increase the sincerity of it. But he may, at least, in the arrangement of a selection like the present, improve, by the absence of what he rejects, the collective effect of what he retains. Many of the poems published in 1857 represent the feverish dictation of a somewhat hectic muse. An unhealthy tone of feeling is not,

indeed, the worst defect of a writer. Some of the world's best literature attests this fact : and health, though an excellent thing, is not the best of all things ; for a sick man will ever remain a nobler being than a perfectly healthy poodle. But, in making up the contents of this volume, it has been my endeavour to mitigate as much as possible the unquiet effect of those restless alternations of sentiment which are not here sanctioned by the spontaneity of a first utterance. Much that was earnest in intention has been discarded with much that was flippant in expression. And, in addition to verses which, for the reasons already stated, are withdrawn from print, many have also been suppressed for no other reason than that their juxtaposition would now involve more frequent and abrupt transitions from the expression of one state of mind to that of another than is reconcilable with the attempt here made to give somewhat of congruity to the contents, and unity to the general character, of a collection of verse not freshly written.

This volume, however, remains the *bonâ fide* utterance of the writer's youth, and is in no wise the product of his present personality. Although some of its contents are now for the first time printed, yet all of them were written many years ago,—at an early age. The imitative character of the "Lines" printed immediately after Clytemnestra is of course intentional.

OWEN MEREDITH.

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# **CLYTEMNESTRA.**

**VOL. I.**

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

**AGAMEMNON.**

**ÆGISTHUS.**

**ORESTES.**

**PHOCIAN.**

**HERALD.**

**CLYTEMNESTRA.**

**ELECTRA.**

**CASSANDRA.**

**CHORUS.**

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

*SCENE.—Before the Palace of Agamemnon in Argos. Trophies, amongst which, the shield of Agamemnon, on the wall.*

*Time, Morning. The action continues till Sunset.*

### I. CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Clytemnestra.* MORNING at last! at last the lingering day

Creeps o'er the dewy side of yon dark world.  
O dawning light already on the hills!  
O universal earth, and air, and thou,  
First freshness of the east, which art a breath  
Breathed from the rapture of the gods, who bless  
Almost all other prayers on earth but mine!  
Wherefore to me is solacing sleep denied?  
And honourable rest, the right of all?  
So that no medicine of the slumbrous shell,  
Brimm'd with divinest draughts of melody,  
Nor silence under dreamful canopies,  
Nor purple cushions of the lofty couch,  
May lull this fever for a little while.  
Wherefore to me—to me, of all mankind,  
This retribution for a deed undone?  
For many men outlive their sum of crimes,

And eat, and drink, and lift up thankful hands,  
And take their rest securely in the dark.  
Am I not innocent—or more than these?  
There is no blot of murder on my brow,  
Nor any taint of blood upon my robe.  
—It is the thought! it is the thought! . . . and men  
Judge us by acts! . . . as though one thunder-clap  
Let all Olympus out. Unquiet heart,  
Ill fares it with thee since, ten sad years past,  
In one wild hour of unacquainted joy  
Thou didst set wide thy lonely bridal doors  
For a forbidden guest to enter in!  
Last night, methought pale Helen, with a frown,  
Swept by me, murmuring, “I—such as thou—  
A Queen in Greece—weak-hearted (woe is me!)  
Allured by love—did, in an evil hour,  
Fall off from duty. Sorrow came. Beware!”  
And then, in sleep, there pass’d a baleful band—  
The ghosts of all the slaughter’d under Troy,  
From this side Styx, who cried, “For such a crime  
We fell from our fair palaces on earth,  
And wander, starless, here. For such a crime  
A thousand ships were launch’d, and tumbled down  
The topless towers of Ilion, though they rose  
To magic music, in the time of gods!”  
With such fierce thoughts for evermore at war,  
Vext, not alone by hankering wild regrets,  
But fears, yet worse, of that which soon must come,  
My heart waits arm’d, and from the citadel  
Of its high sorrow, sees far off dark shapes,  
And hears the footsteps of Necessity  
Tread near, and nearer, hand in hand with Woe.

Last night, the flaming Herald warning urged  
 Up all the hills—small time to pause and plan !  
 Counsel is weak : and much remains to do,  
 That Agamemnon, and, if else remain  
 Of that enduring band who sail'd for Troy  
 Ten years ago (and some sail'd Lethe-ward),  
 Find us not unprepared for their return.

But—hark ! I hear the tread of nimble feet  
 That sound this way. The rising town is pour'd  
 About the festive altars of the gods,  
 And from the heart of the great Agora,  
 Lets out its gladness for this last night's news.  
 —Ah, so it is ! Insidious, sly Report,  
 Sounding oblique, like Loxian oracles,  
 Tells double-tongued (and with the self-same voice !)  
 To some new gladness, new despair to some.

## II. CHORUS AND CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Chorus.* O dearest Lady, daughter of Tyndarus !  
 With purple flowers we come, and offerings—  
 Oil, and wine ; and cakes of honey,  
 Soothing, unadulterate ; tapestries  
 Woven by white Argive maidens,  
 God-descended (woven only  
 For the homeward feet of heroes)  
 To celebrate this glad intelligence  
 Which last night the fiery courier  
 Brought us, posting up from Ilion,  
 Wheel'd above the dusky circle  
 Of the hills from lighted Ida.

For now (Troy lying extinguish'd,  
Underneath a mighty Woe)  
Our King and chief of men,  
Agamemnon, returning  
(And with him the hope of Argos)  
Shall worship at the Tutelary Altars  
Of their dear native land :  
In the Fane of ancient Herè,  
Or the glorious Lycian God ;  
Immortally crown'd with reverend honour !  
But tell us wherefore, O godlike woman,  
Having a lofty trouble in your eye,  
You walk alone with loosen'd tresses ?

*Clytemnestra.* Shall the ship toss, and yet the  
helm not heave ?

Shall they drowse sitting at the lower oars,  
When those that hold the middle benches wake ?  
He that is yet sole eye of all our state  
Shining not here, shall ours be shut in dreams ?  
But haply you (thrice happy !) prove not this,  
The curse of Queens, and worse than widow'd wives—  
To wake, and hear, all night, the wandering gnat  
Sing through the silent chambers, while Alarm,  
In place of Slumber, by the haunted couch  
Stands sentinel ; or when from coast to coast  
Wails the night-wandering wind, or when o'er heaven  
Boötes hath unleash'd his fiery hounds,  
And Night her glittering camps hath set, and lit  
Her watch-fires through the silence of the skies,  
—To count ill chances in the dark, and feel  
Deserted pillows wet with tears, not kisses,  
Where kisses once fell.

But now Expectation

Stirs up such restless motions of the blood  
As suffer not my lids to harbour sleep.  
Wherefore, O beloved companions,  
I wake betimes, and wander up and down,  
Looking toward the distant hill-tops,  
From whence shall issue fair fulfilment  
Of all our ten-years' hoping. For, behold!  
Troy being captived, we shall see once more  
Those whom we loved in days of old.  
Yet some will come not from the Phrygian shore,  
But there lie weltering to the surf and wind;  
Exiled from day, in darkness blind,  
Or having crost unhappy Styx:  
And some who left us full of vigorous youth  
Shall greet us now gray-headed men.  
But if our eyes behold again  
Our long-expected chief, in truth,  
Fortune for us hath thrown the Treble Six.

*Chorus.* By us, indeed, these things are also wish'd.  
Wherefore, if now to this great son of Atreus  
(Having survived the woeful walls of Troy),  
With us, once more, the gods permit to stand  
A glad man by the pillars of his hearth,  
Let his dear life henceforth be such wherein  
The Third Libation often shall be pour'd.

*Clytemnestra.* And let his place be number'd with  
the gods,  
Who overlook the world's eternal walls,  
Out of all reach of sad calamities.

*Chorus.* It is not well, I think, that men should set  
Too near the gods any of mortal kind:

But brave men are as gods upon the earth.

*Clytemnestra.* And whom death daunts not, these  
are truly brave.

*Chorus.* But more than all I reckon that man blest  
Who, having sought death nobly, finds it not.

*Clytemnestra.* Except he find it where he does not  
seek.

*Chorus.* You speak in riddles.

*Clytemnestra.* For so Wisdom speaks.  
But now do you with garlands wreath the altars,  
And pour libations large, sweet spices burning ;  
While I, within, the House prepare.  
That so our King, at his returning,  
With his golden Armament,  
Find us not unaware  
Of the god-given event.

*Chorus.* Soon shall we see the faces that we loved ;

Brother once more clasping brother,  
As in the unforgotten days :

And heroes, meeting one another  
(Men by glorious toils approved)  
Where once they roved,

Shall rove again the old familiar ways.

And they that from the distance come  
Shall feed their hearts with tales of home ;  
And tell the famous story of the war,  
Rumour'd sometime from afar.

Now shall these again behold  
The ancient Argos ; and the grove  
Long since trod  
By the frenzied child of Inachus ;  
And the Forum, famed of old,  
Of the wolf-destroying God ;

And the opulent Mycænae,  
Home of the Pelopidæ ;  
While they rove with those they love,  
Holding pleasant talk with us.  
O how gloriously they went,  
That avenging Armament !  
As though Olympus in her womb  
No longer did entomb  
The greatness of a bygone world—  
Gods and godlike men—  
But cast them forth again  
To frighten Troy : such storm was hurl'd  
On her devoted towers  
By the retributive Deity,  
Whosoe'er he be  
Of the Immortal Powers—  
Or mad'ning Pan, if he chastise  
His Shepherd's Phrygian treacheries ;  
Or vengeful Loxias ; or Zeus,  
Anger'd for the shame and abuse  
Of a great man's hospitality.

As wide as is Olympus' span  
Is the power of the high gods ;  
Who, in their golden blest abodes  
See all things, looking from the sky ;  
And Heaven is hard to pacify  
For the wickedness of man.  
My heart is fill'd with vague forebodings,  
And opprest by unknown terrors,  
Lest, in the light of so much gladness,  
Rise the shadow of ancient wrong.

O Daemon of the double lineage  
 Of Tantalus, and the Pleisthenidæ,  
 Inexorable in thy mood,  
 On the venerable threshold  
 Of the ancient House of Pelops  
 Surely is enough of blood !  
 Wherefore doth my heart misgive me ?  
 Wherefore comes this doubt to grieve me ?  
 O, may no Divine Envy  
 Follow home the Argive army,  
 Being vext for things ill-done  
 In wilful pride of stubborn war,  
 Long since, in the distant lands !  
 May no Immortal Wrath pursue  
 Our dear King, the Light of Argos,  
 For the unhappy sacrifice  
 Of a daughter ; working evil  
 In the dark heart of a woman ;  
 Or some household treachery,  
 And a curse from kindred hands !

## III. CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Clytemnestra (re-entering from the house).* To-mor-  
 row . . ay, what if to-day ? . . Well—then ?  
 Why, if those tongues of flame, with which last night  
 The land was eloquent, spoke certain truth,  
 By this perchance through green Saronic rocks  
 Those black ships glide . . . perchance . . . well, what's  
 to fear ?  
 'Twere well to dare the worst—to know the end—  
 Die soon, or live secure. What's left to add

To years of nights like those which I have known ?  
Shall I shrink now to meet one little hour  
Which I have dared to contemplate for years ?  
By all the gods, not so ! The end crowns all,  
Which if we fail to seize, that's also lost  
Which went before : as who would lead a host  
Through desolate dry places, yet return  
In sight of kingdoms, when the Gods are roused  
To mark the issue ? . . . And yet, yet—

I think

Three nights ago there must have been sea-storms.  
The wind was wild among the Palace towers :  
Far off upon the hideous Element  
I know it huddled up the petulant waves,  
Whose shapeless and bewildering precipices  
Led to the belly of Orcus . . . oh, to slip  
Into dark Lethe from a dizzy plank,  
When even the gods are reeling on the poop !  
To drown at night, and have no sepulchre !—  
That were too horrible ! . . . yet it may be  
Some easy chance, that comes with little pain,  
Might rid me of the haunting of those eyes,  
And these wild thoughts . . To know he roved among  
His old companions in the Happy Fields,  
And ranged with heroes—I still innocent !  
Sleep would be natural then.

Yet will the old time

Never return ! never those peaceful hours !  
Never that careless heart ! and nevermore,  
Ah, nevermore that laughter without pain !  
But I, that languish for repose, must fly it,  
Nor, save in daring, doing, taste of rest.

Oh to have lost all these ! To have barter'd calm,  
 And all the irrevocable wealth of youth,  
 And gain'd . . . what ? But this change had surely come,  
 Even were all things other than they are.  
 I blame myself o'ermuch, who should blame time,  
 And life's inevitable loss, and fate,  
 And days grown lovelier in the retrospect.  
 We change : wherefore look back ? The path to safety  
 Lies forward . . . forward ever.

*[In passing toward the house she recognizes the shield of Agamemnon, and pauses before it.]*

Ha ! old shield,

Hide up for shame that honest face of thine.  
 Stare not so bluntly at us . . . Gods, this man !  
 Why sticks the thought of him so in my heart ?  
 If I had loved him once—if for one hour—  
 Then were there treason in this falling off.  
 But never did I feel this wretched heart  
 Until it leap'd beneath Ægisthus' eyes.  
 Who could have so forecounted all from first ?  
 From that flusht moment when his hand in mine  
 Rested a thought too long, a touch too kind,  
 To leave its pulse unwarm'd . . . but I remember  
 I dream'd sweet dreams that night, and slept till dawn,  
 And woke with flutterings of a happy thought,  
 And felt, not worse, but better . . . and now . . . now ?  
 When first a strange and novel tenderness  
 Quiver'd in these salt eyes, had one said then  
 “ A bead of dew may drag a deluge down :”—  
 In that first pensive pause, through which I watch'd  
 Unwonted sadness on Ægisthus' brows,  
 Had some one whisper'd, “ Ay, the summer-cloud

Comes first : the tempest follows."—

Well, what's past

Is past. Perchance the worst's to follow yet.

How thou art hack'd and hewn and bruised, old shield!

Was the whole edge of the war against one man ?

But one thrust more upon this dexter ridge

Had quite cut through the double inmost hide.

He must have stood to it well ! Ay, he was cast

I' the mould of Titans : a magnificent man,

With head and shoulders like a god's. He seem'd

Too brimful of this merry vigorous life

To spill it all out at one stab o' the sword.

Yet that had help'd much ill . . . Our fears are fates

That make us cowards or else culprits all !

Ah, had some Trojan weapon . . . Fool ! fool ! fool !

Surely sometimes the unseen Eumenides

Do prompt our musing moods with wicked hints,

And lash us for our crimes ere we commit them.

Here, round this silver boss, he cut my name,

Once—long ago : he cut it as he lay

Tired out with brawling pastimes—prone—his limbs

At length diffused—his head droopt in my lap—

His spear flung by : Electra by the hearth

Sat with the young Orestes on her knee ;

While he, with an old broken sword, hack'd out

These crooked characters, and laugh'd to see

(Sprawl'd from the unused strength of his large hands)

The marks make CLYTEMNESTRA.

How he laugh'd !

Ægisthus' hands are smaller.

Yet I know

That matrons envied me my husband's strength.

And I remember when he strode among  
 The Argive crowd he topp'd them by a head,  
 And tall men stood wide-eyed to look at him,  
 Where his great plumes went tossing up and down  
 The brazen prores drawn out upon the sand.  
 War on his front was graved, as on thy disc,  
 Shield ! which he left to keep his memory  
 Grand in men's mouths : that some revered old man,  
 Winning to this the eyes of our hot youth,  
 Might say, "Twashere, and here—this dint and that—  
 On such and such a field (which we remember)  
 That Agamemnon, in the great old time,  
 Held up the battle."

Now lie there, and rust !

Thy uses all have end. Thy master's home  
 Should harbour none but friends.

O triple brass,

Iron, and oak ! the blows of blundering men  
 Clang idly on you : what fool's strength is yours !  
 For, surely, not the adamantine tunic  
 Of Ares, nor whole shells of blazing plates,  
 Nor ashen spear, nor all the cumbrous coil  
 Of seven bulls' hides, may guard the strongest king  
 From one defenceless woman's quiet hate.

What noise was that ? Where can *Ægisthus* be ?  
*Ægisthus* !—my *Ægisthus* ! . . . There again !  
 Louder, and longer—from the Agora—  
 A mighty shout : and now I see i' the air  
 A rolling dust the wind blows near. *Ægisthus* !  
 O much I fear . . . this wild-will'd race of ours  
 Doth ever, like a young unbroken colt,

Chafe at the straighten'd bridle of our state—  
 If they should find him lone, irresolute,  
 As is his wont . . . I know he lacks the eye  
 And forehead wherewith crown'd Capacity  
 Awes rash Rebellion back.

Again that shout !

Gods keep Ægisthus safe ! myself will front  
 This novel storm. How my heart leaps to danger !  
 I have been so long a pilot on rough seas,  
 And almost rudderless !

O yet 'tis much

To feel a power, self-centred, self-assured,  
 Bridling a glorious danger ! as when one  
 That knows the nature of the elements  
 Guides some frail plank with sublime skill that wins  
 Progress from all obstruction ; and, erect,  
 Looks bold and free down all the dripping stars,  
 Hearing the hungry storm boom, baffled, by.  
 Ægisthus ! . . . hark ! . . . Ægisthus ! . . . there . . .

Ægisthus !

I would to all the gods I knew him safe.  
 Who comes this way, guiding his racing feet  
 Up to us, like a nimble charioteer ?

#### IV. CLYTEMNESTRA. HERALD.

*Clytemnestra.* Now, gloom-bird ! are there prodigies about ?  
 What new ill-thing sent thee before ?

*Herald.* O Queen—  
*Clytemnestra.* Speak, if thou hast a voice ! I listen.  
*Herald.* O Queen—

*Clytemnestra.* Hath an ox trodden on thy tongue?  
 . . . Speak then!

*Herald.* O Queen (for haste hath caught away my  
 breath)

The King is coming.

*Clytemnestra.* Say again—the King  
 Is coming—

*Herald.* Even now, the broad sea-fields  
 Grow white with flocks of sails, and toward the west  
 The sloped horizon teems with rising beaks.

*Clytemnestra.* The people know this?

*Herald.* Heard you not the noise?  
 For soon as this wing'd news had touch'd the gates  
 The whole land shouted in the sun.

*Clytemnestra.* So soon!  
 The thought's outsped by the reality,  
 And halts agape . . . the King—

*Herald.* How she is moved!  
 A noble woman!

*Clytemnestra.* Wherefore beat so fast,  
 Thou foolish heart? 'tis not thy master—

*Herald.* Truly  
 She looks all over Agamemnon's mate.

*Clytemnestra.* Destiny, Destiny! The deed's half  
 done.

*Herald.* She will not speak, save by that brood-  
 ing eye

Whose light is language. Some great thought, I see,  
 Mounts up the royal chambers of her blood,  
 As a king mounts his palace; holds high pomp  
 In her Olympian bosom; gains her face,  
 Possesses all her noble glowing cheek

With sudden state ; and gathers grandly up  
Its slow majestic meanings in her eyes !

*Clytemnestra.* So quick this sudden joy hath taken us,  
I scarce can realize the sum of it.

You say the King comes here—the King, my husband,  
Whom we have waited for ten years—O joy !

Pardon our seeming roughness at the first.

Hope, that will often fawn upon despair

And flatter desperate chances, when the event

Falls at our feet, soon takes a querulous tone,

And jealous of that perfect joy she guards,

Snarls at all comers, like a hungry hound

Whose paw is on the bone, he leap'd erewhile

To win, or, couching, craved with gentle craft.

But now do you, with what good speed you may,  
Make known this glad intelligence to all.

Ourselves, within, as best befits a wife

And woman, will prepare my husband's house.

Also, I pray you, summon to our side

Our cousin, Agisthus. We would speak with him.

We would that our own lips should be the first

To break these tidings to him ; so obtaining

New joy by sharing his. And, for yourself,

Receive our gratitude. For this great news

Henceforth you hold our royal love in fee.

Our fairest fortunes from this day I date,

And to the House of Tantalus new honour.

*Herald.* She's gone ! With what a majesty she fill'd  
The whole of space ! The statues of the gods  
Are not so godlike. She has Here's eyes,  
And looks immortal !

## V. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS. •

*Clytemnestra (as she ascends the steps of the Palace).*

So . . . while on the verge  
 Of some wild purpose we hang dizzily,  
 Weighing the danger of the leap below  
 Against the danger of retreating steps,  
 Upon a sudden, some forecast event,  
 Issuing full-arm'd from councils of the gods,  
 Strides to us, plucks us by the hair, and hurls  
 Headlong pale Conscience, to the abyss of Crime.  
 Well—I shrink not. 'Tis but a leap in life.  
 There's fate in this. Why is he here so soon ?  
 The sight of whose abhorred eyes will add  
 Whatever lacks of strength to this resolve.  
 Away with shame ! I have had enough of it.  
 What's here for shame ? . . . the weak against the strong ?  
 And if the weak be victor ? . . . what of that ?  
 Tush ! . . . there—my soul is set to it. What need  
 Of argument to justify an act  
 Necessity compels, and must absolve ?  
 For that which must be, being what it must,  
 Is neither well nor ill ; nor is there good  
 Or evil in unmindful circumstance ;  
 But that's wrong only which doth contradict  
 Its being, being to itself untrue.  
 And I, that am not blown about by chance,  
 But moved to my design as thunder-clouds  
 That, moving, in their conscious bosoms bear  
 The angry meaning of a god, obey  
 Forces within me which flow all one way.

*Chorus.* Upon the everlasting hills  
Thronèd Justice works, and waits.  
Between the shooting of a star,  
*That falls unseen on summer nights*  
Out of the bosom of the dark,  
And the magnificent march of War,  
Roll'd from angry lands afar  
Round some doomèd city gates,  
Nothing is to her unknown;  
Nothing unseen.  
Upon her hills she sits alone,  
And in the balance of Eternity  
Poises against the What-has-been  
The weight of What-shall-be.  
She sums the account of human ills.  
The great world's hoarded wrongs and rights  
Are in her treasures. She will mark,  
With inward-searching eyes sublime,  
The frauds of Time.  
The empty future years she fills  
Out of the past. All human wills  
Sway to her on her reachless heights.

Wisdom she teaches men, with tears,  
In the toilful school of years :  
Climbing from event to event.  
And, being patient, is content  
To stretch her sightless arms about,  
And find some human instrument,  
From many sorrows to work out  
Her distant, undivulged intent.

She the two Atridae sent  
 Upon Ilion ; giving vent  
 To Heaven's vengeance, that, befriending  
 Injured Honour, not unheard  
 Cried against the Phrygian Crime :  
 Them the Thunder-bearing Bird,  
 From the thunder-loft descending,  
 Sought and summon'd forth to fates sublime.

She, being injured, for the sake  
 Of her, the often-wedded wife  
 (Too loved, and too adoring !)  
 Many a brazen band did break  
 In many a breathless battle-strife ;  
 Many a noble life did take ;  
 Many a headlong agony,  
 Phrenzied shout, and frantic cry,  
 For Greek and Trojan storing.

When, the spear in the onset being shiver'd,  
 The reeling ranks were roll'd together  
 Like mad waves mingling in windy weather,  
 Dasht fearfully over and over each other.  
 And the plumes of Princes were toss'd and thrust,  
 And dragg'd about in the shameful dust ;  
 And the painful, panting breath  
 Came and went in the tug of death :  
 And the sinews were loosen'd, and the strong knees  
 stricken :  
 And the eyes began to darken and thicken :  
 And the arm of the mighty and terrible quiver'd.  
 O Love ! Love ! Love ! How terrible art thou !  
 How terrible !  
 O, what hast thou to do

With men of mortal years,  
Who toil below,  
And have enough of griefs for tears to flow ?  
O range in higher spheres !  
Hast thou, O hast thou, no diviner hues  
To paint thy wings, but must transfuse  
An Iris-light from tears ?  
For human hearts are all too weak to hold thee.  
And how, O Love, shall human arms enfold thee ?  
There is a seal of sorrow on thy brow.  
There is a scorching blight upon thy breath.  
With life thou lurest, yet thou givest death.  
O Love, the gods are weak by reason of thee,  
And many wars have been upon the earth.  
Thou art the sweetest source of salttest sorrows.  
Thy blest to-days bring such unblest to-morrows ;  
Thy softest hope makes saddest memory.  
Thou hadst destruction in thee from the birth ;  
Incomprehensible !

O Love, thy brightest bridal garments  
Are poison'd, like that robe of agonies  
Which Deianira wove for Hercules,  
And, being put on, turn presently to cerements !  
Thou art unconquer'd in the fight.  
Thou rangest over land and sea.  
O let the foolish nations be !  
Keep thy divine desire  
To upheave mountains, or to kindle fire  
From the keen frost, and set the world alight.  
Why make thy red couch in the damask cheek ?  
Or light thy torch at languid eyes ?

Or lie entangled in soft sighs  
 On pensive lips that will not speak ?  
 To sow the seeds of evil things  
 In the hearts of headstrong kings ?  
 Preparing many a kindred strife  
 For the fearful future hour ?  
 O leave the wretched race of man,  
*Whose days are but the dying seasons' span ;*  
 Vex not his painful life !  
 Make thine immortal sport  
 In Heaven's high court,  
 And cope with gods that are of equal power.

## VI. ELECTRA. CHORUS. CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Electra.* Now is at hand the hour of retribution.  
 For my father, at last returning,  
 In great power, being greatly injured,  
 Will destroy the base adulterer,  
 And efface the shameful Past.

*Chorus.* O child of the godlike Agamemnon !  
 Leave vengeance to the power of Heaven ;  
 Nor forestall with impious footsteps  
 The brazen tread of black Erinnys.

*Electra.* Is it, besotted with the adulterous sin,  
 Or, as with flattery pleasing present power,  
 Or, being intimidate, you speak these words ?

*Chorus.* Nay, but desiring justice, like yourself.

*Electra.* Yet Justice oftentimes uses mortal means.

*Chor.* But flings aside her tools when work is done.

*Clytemnestra.* Dearest friends, inform me, went  
 this way

*Aegisthus?*

*Chorus.* Even now, hurrying hitherward,  
I see him walk, with irritated eyes.

*Clytemnestra.* A reed may show which way the  
tempest blows.

That face is pale—those brows are dark . . . ah !

#### VII. ÆGISTHUS. CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Ægisthus.* Agamemnon—

*Clytemnestra.* My husband . . . well ?

*Ægisthus.* (Whom may the great Gods curse !)  
Is scarce an hour hence.

*Clytemnestra.* Then that hour's yet saved  
From sorrow. Smile, Ægisthus—

*Ægisthus.* Hear me speak.

*Clytemnestra.* Not as your later wont hath been  
to smile—

Quick, fierce, as though you scarce could hurry out  
The wild thing fast enough ; for smiling's sake,  
As if to show you could smile, though in fear  
Of what might follow—but as first you smiled  
Years, years ago, when some slow loving thought  
Stole down your face, and settled on your lips,  
As though a sunbeam halted on a rose,  
And mix'd with fragrance, light. Can you smile still  
Just so, Ægisthus ?

*Ægisthus.* These are idle words,  
And like the wanderings of some fever'd brain :  
Extravagant phrases, void of import, wild.

*Clytemnestra.* Ah, no ! you cannot smile so, more.

Nor I !

*Ægisthus.* Hark ! in an hour the King—

*Ægisthus.*      Woman ! woman ! this  
Surpasses frenzy ! Not a breath of time  
Between us and the clutch of Destiny—  
Already sound there footsteps at our heels,  
Already comes a heat against our cheek,  
Already fingers cold among our hair,  
And you speak lightly thus, as though the day  
Linger'd toward nuptial hours ! . . . awake ! arouse !  
*Clytemnestra.* I do wake . . . well, the King—  
*Ægisthus.*                  Even while we speak  
Draws near. And we—

*Clytemnestra.* Must meet him.  
*Ægisthus.* Meet? ay . . . how?  
*Clytem.* As mortals should meet fortune—calmly.  
*Ægisthus.* Quick!

Consult! consult! Yet there is time to choose  
The path to follow.

*Clytemnestra.* I have chosen it  
Long since.

*Ægisthus.* How!—

*Clytemnestra.* Oh, have we not had ten years  
To ripen counsel, and mature resolve?  
What's to add now?

*Ægisthus.* I comprehend you not.  
The time is plucking at our sleeve.

*Clytemnestra.* *Ægisthus!*  
There shall be time for deeds, and soon enough,  
Let that come when it may. And it may be  
Deeds must be done shall shut and shrivel up  
All quiet thoughts, and quite preclude repose  
To the end of time. Upon this awful strait  
And promontory of our mortal life  
We stand between what was, and is not yet.  
The gods allot to us a little space,  
Before the contests which must soon begin,  
For calmer breathing. All before lies dark  
And difficult, and perilous, and strange;  
And all behind . . . What if we take one look,  
One last long lingering look (before despair,  
The shadow of failure, or remorse, which often  
Waits on success, can come 'twixt us and it,  
And darken all) at that which yet must seem  
Undimm'd in the long retrospect of years—

The beautiful imperishable Past !  
 Were this not natural, being innocent now  
 —At least of that which is the greater crime ?  
 To-night we shall not be so.

*Ægisthus.* Ah, to-night !  
*Clytemnestra.* All will be done which now the  
 gods foresee.

The sun shines still.

*Ægisthus.* I oft have mark'd some day  
 Begin all gold in his flusht orient,  
 With splendid promise to the waiting world,  
 And turn to blackness ere the sun ran down.  
 So draws our love to its dark close. To-night—

*Clytemnestra.* Shall bring our bridals, my Be-  
 loved ! For, either  
 Upon the melancholy shores of Death  
 (One shadow near the doors of Pluto), greeted  
 By pale Proserpina, our steps shall be,  
 Or else, secure, in the great empty palace  
 We shall sleep crown'd—no noise to startle us—  
 And Argos silent round us—all our own !

*Ægisth.* In truth I do not dare to think this thing,  
 For all the Greeks will hate us.

*Clytemnestra.* What of that ?  
 If that they do not harm us—as who shall ?

*Ægisth.* Moreover, though we triumph in the act  
 (And we may fail, and fall), we shall go down  
 Cover'd with this reproach into the tomb,  
 Hunted by all the red Eumenides ;  
 And, in the end, the ghost of him we slew,  
 Being beforehand there, will come between  
 Us and the awful Judges of the Dead !

And no one on this earth will pray for us ;  
 And no hand will hang garlands on our urns,  
 Either of man, or maid, or little child ;  
 But we shall be dishonour'd.

*Clytemnestra.*                    O faint heart !

When this poor life of ours is done with—all  
 Its foolish days put by—its bright and dark—  
 Its praise and blame—roll'd quite away—gone o'er  
 Like some brief pageant—will it stir us more,  
 Where we are gone, how men may hoot or shout  
 After our footsteps, than the dust and garlands  
 A few mad boys and girls fling in the air  
 When a great host is pass'd, can cheer or vex  
 The minds of men already out of sight  
 Towards other lands, with paean and with pomp  
 Array'd near vaster forces ? For the future,  
 We will smoke hecatombs, and build new fanes,  
 And be you sure the gods deal leniently  
 With those who grapple for their life, and pluck it  
 From the closed gripe of Fate, albeit perchance  
 Some ugly smutch, some drop of blood or so,  
 A spot here, there a streak, or stain of gore,  
 Should in the contest fall to them, and mar  
 That life's original whiteness.

*Ægisthus.*                        Tombs have tongues  
 That talk in Hades. Think it ! Dare we hope,  
 This done, to be more happy ?

*Clytemnestra.*                    My Beloved,  
 We are not happy—we may never be,  
 Perchance, again. Yet it is much to think  
 We have been so : and even though we must weep,  
 We have enjoy'd.

The roses and the thorns  
We have pluck'd together. We have proved both. Say,  
Was it not worth the bleeding hands they left us  
To have won such flowers? And if 't were possible  
To keep them still—keep even the wither'd leaves,  
Even the wither'd leaves are worth our care.  
We will not tamely give up life—such life!  
What though the years before, like those behind,  
Be dark as clouds the thunder sits among,  
Tipt only here and there with a wan gold  
More bright for rains between?—'tis much—'tis more,  
For we shall ever think "the sun's behind.  
The sun must shine before the day goes down!"  
Anything better than the long, long night,  
And that perpetual silence of the tomb!  
'Tis not for happier hours, but life itself,  
Which may bring happier hours, we strike at Fate.  
Why, though from all the treasury of the Past  
'Tis but one solitary gem we save—  
One kiss more such as we have kist, one smile,  
One more embrace, one night more such as those  
Which we have shared, how costly were the prize,  
How richly worth the attempt! Indeed, I know,  
When yet a child, in those dim pleasant dreams  
A girl will dream, perchance in twilit hours,  
Or under eve's first star (when we are young  
Happiness seems so possible—so near!  
One says, "it must go hard, but I shall find it!")  
Ofttimes I mused—"My life shall be my own,  
To make it what I will." It is their fault  
(I thought) who miss the true delights. I thought  
Men might have saved themselves: they flung away,

Too easily abasht, life's opening promise :  
But all things will be otherwise for me.  
For I felt life so strong in me ! indeed  
I was so sure of my own power to love  
And to enjoy—I had so much to give,  
I said, “ be sure it must win something back ! ”  
Youth is so confident ! And though I saw  
All women sad—not only those I knew,  
As Helen (whom from youth I knew, nor ever  
Divined that sad impenetrable smile  
Which oft would darken through her lustrous eyes,  
As, drawing slowly down o'er her cold cheek  
The yellow braids of odorous hair, she turn'd  
From Meneläus praising her, and sigh'd—  
That was before he, flinging bitterly down  
The trampled parsley-crown and undrain'd goblet,  
Cursed before all the gods his sudden shame  
And young Hermione's deserted youth !)  
Not only her—but all whose lives I learn'd,  
Medea, Deianeira, Ariadne,  
And many others—all weak, wrong'd, opprest,  
Or sick and sorrowful, as I am now—  
Yet in their fate I would not see my own,  
Nor grant allegiance to that general law  
From which a few, I knew a very few,  
With whom it seem'd I also might be number'd,  
Had yet escaped securely :—so exempting  
From this world's desolation everywhere  
One fate—my own !

Well, that was foolish ! Now  
I am not so exacting. As we move  
Further and further down the path of fate

To the sure tomb, we yield up, one by one,  
 Our claims on Fortune, till with each new year  
 We seek less and go further to obtain it.  
 'Tis the old tale—that's ever told anew,  
 Ever in vain ! O there is thrift in Fate,  
 Thrift, patching thrift, *Ægisthus* ! that contrives  
 Endless new uses for the same old stuff,  
 And garments us with the discarded robes  
 Of our released forerunners. Yet even this  
 Ill-fitting life I would not fling away  
 Ere thoroughly worn out,—no effort made  
 To mend, and make it . . . what it yet may be !

*Ægisthus.* What can we make it less than miserable ?

More wrong will be, and then more wretchedness.  
 Best we part now.

*Clytemnestra.* Part ! what, to part from thee !  
 Never till death—not in death even, part !

*Ægisthus.* But one course now is left.

*Clytemnestra.* And that is—

*Ægisthus.* Flight.

*Clytemnestra.* Coward !

*Ægisthus.* I care not.

*Clytemnestra.* Flight ! I am a Queen.

A goddess once you said—and why not goddess ?  
 Seeing the gods are mightier than we  
 By so much more of courage. Oh, not I,  
 But you, are mad.

*Ægisthus.* Nay, wiser than I was.

*Clytemnestra.* And you will leave me ?

*Ægisthus.* Not if you will come.

*Clytemnestra.* This was the Atlas of the world I built !

*Ægisthus.* Flight ! . . . yes, I know not . . . some-  
where . . . anywhere.

You come ? . . . you come not ? . . . well ? . . . no time  
to pause !

*Clytemnestra.* And this is he—this he, the man  
I loved !

And this is retribution ! O my heart !

O Agamemnon, how art thou avenged !

And I have done so much for him ! . . . would do  
So much ! . . . a universe lies ruin'd here.

Now, by Apollo, be a man for once !

Be for once strong, or be for ever weak !

If shame be dead, and honour be no more,  
No more true faith, nor that which in old time  
Made us like Gods, sublime in our high place,  
Yet all surviving instincts warn from flight.

Flight !—oh, impossible ! Even now the steps  
Of fate are at the threshold. Which way fly ?  
For every avenue is barr'd by death.

Will these not scout your flying heels ? If now  
They hate us powerful, will they love us weak ?  
No land is safe ; nor any neighbouring king  
Will harbour Agamemnon's enemy.

Reflect on Troy ; her ashes smoulder yet.

*Ægisthus.* Her words compel me with their awful  
truth ;

For so would vengeance hound and earth us down.

*Clytemnestra.* If I am weak to move you by that  
love

You swore long since—and seal'd it with false lips !  
Yet lives there nothing of the ambitious will ?  
Of those proud plots, and dexterous policy,

Whereon you builded such high hopes, and swore  
 To rule this people Agamemnon rules;<sup>c</sup>  
 Supplant him eminent on his own throne,  
 And push our power through Greece?

*Ægisthus.*                           The dream was great!  
 It was a dream. We dream'd it like a King.

*Clytemnestra.* Ay, and shall so fulfil it—like a King!  
 Who talks of flight? For now, bethink you well,  
 If to live on, the by-word of a world,  
 Be any gain, even such flight offers not.  
 Will long-arm'd Vengeance never find you out  
 When you have left the weapon in her hands?  
 Be bold, and meet her! Who forestall the bolts  
 Of heaven, the gods deem worthy of the gods.  
 Success is made the measure of our acts.  
 And think, *Ægisthus*, there has been one thought  
 Before us in the intervals of years,  
 Between us ever in the long dark nights,  
 When, lying all awake, we heard the wind.  
 Did you shrink then? or, only closer drawing  
 Your lips to mine, your arins about my neck,  
 Say, “Who would fear such chances, when he saw  
 Behind them such a prize for him as this?”  
 Do you shrink now? Dare you put all this from you?  
 Revoke the promise of those years, and say  
 This prospect meets you unprepared at last?  
 Our motives are so mixt in their beginnings  
 And so confused, we recognize them not  
 Till they are grown to acts; but ne'er were ours  
 So blindly woven;<sup>d</sup> but what we both untangled  
 Out of the intricacies of the heart  
 One purpose:—being found, best grapple to it.

For to conceive ill deeds yet dare not do them,  
This is not ~~Virtue~~, but a twofold shame.

The weakly-wicked shall be doubly damn'd !

*Aegisthus.* I am not weak . . . what will you? . . .

O too weak

To bear this scorn !

*Clytemnestra.* My heart inhabits thine.  
In thee the best of all I am doth live.  
Have thou a manly made up mind foursquare  
To opposition. For the world, indeed,  
Is many, but divided : if we two  
Be one, then is our twofold oneness more  
And mightier than all the world. O friend,  
Those who on perilous ventures once embark  
Should burn their ships, nor ever dream return.  
Better, though all Olympus march'd on us,  
To die like fallen Titans, scorning Heaven,  
Than live like slaves in scorn of our own selves !

*Aegisthus.* We wait then? Good! and dare this  
desperate chance.

And if we fall (as we, I think, must fall)  
It is but some few sunny hours we lose,  
Some few bright days. True! and a little less  
Of life, or else of wrong a little more,  
What's that? For one shade more or less the night  
Will scarce seem darker or lighter—the long night!  
We'll die together,—

*Clytemnestra.* Or together live!

Now you resume yourself, your royal self,  
Your true self—my true love's elected lord!  
Nor will I deem your foot less firm than mine,  
Treading the rugged road of this resolve,

Because your gaze is on the dreadful base,  
 Mine on the glorious eminence. But here  
 Our way lies upward over an abyss ;  
 Look not below, there's peril in it. We both  
 Must fix our sight upon the summit fast,  
 Nor ever let go hands. Dear love, be sure  
 Whate'er betide, whether for well or ill,  
 Thy fate and mine are bound up in one skein,  
 Clotho must cut them both inseparable.  
 You dare not leave me—had you wings for flight !  
 You shall not leave me ! You are mine,—you are me !  
 Live in my life ! monarch of me that am  
 Your life's necessity, as you my love's.  
 Love me, that I may live : and live, dear love,  
 That I may love you. In your love's my life,  
 And my life's yours : for, as your life you love,  
 So doth my life love you : and, for love's sake,  
 I mean that you, for life's sake, shall love me.  
 —His lip's com prest—his eye dilates—he is saved !

*Ægisthus.* If . . .

*Clytemnestra.* If's a coward.

*Ægisthus.* If we live, I say,—

*Clytemnestra.* And we shall live.

*Ægisthus.* Yet . . . yet—

*Clytemnestra.* What ! shrinking still ?

I'll do the deed. Do not stand off from me.

*Ægisthus.* O, breathe not, breathe not on me !  
 not so near !

Thy breath throbs in me, like a living thing.

Thou look'st a woman, but thou art not one.

*Clytemnestra.* I am a woman, and I feel as one.

*Ægisthus.* No, you great gods ! have merely mortal eyes

This strange and thrilling power to overwhelm  
 And waste us in a wonder without end ?  
 Thou nameless spirit, terrible and fair !

*Clytemnestra.* Not terrible ! Ah me, not terrible,  
 Not to thee terrible—O say not so !  
 To thee I never have been anything  
 But a weak, passionate, unhappy woman  
 (O woe is me !) and now you fear me—

*Ægisthus.* No,  
 But rather worship.

*Clytemnestra.* Worship ? . . . ah but love—

*Ægisthus.* O intricate eyes, beneath whose reg-  
 nant orbs

My spirit is as still as night beneath  
 The stargirt glory of the solemn moon !

*Clytemnestra.* I will not doubt ! All's lost, if love  
 be lost—

Peace, honour, innocence—gone, gone ! all gone !  
 And you, too—you, poor baffled crownless schemer,  
 Whose life my love makes royal, clothes in purple,  
 Establishes in state, without me, answer me,  
 What should you do but perish, as is fit ?  
 O love, you dare not cease to love me now !  
 We have let the world go by us. We have trusted  
 To ourselves only : if we fail ourselves  
 What shall avail us now ? Without my love  
 What rests for you but universal hate,  
 And Agamemnon's sword ? Ah, no—you love me,  
 Must love me, better than you ever loved—  
 Love me, I think, as you love life itself :  
*Ægisthus ! Speak, Ægisthus !*

*Ægisthus.* Mighty heart !

I am all yours. Do with me what you will.

*Clytemnestra.* And you do love me still?

*Ægisthus.* Ay, more, thrice more,

Thrice more than wert thou Aphrodite's self

Stept zoned and sandal'd from the Olympian Feast,  
Or first reveal'd among the pink sea-foam.

*Clytemnes.* Whate'er I am, be sure that I am that  
Which thou hast made me—nothing of myself.

Once, all unheedful, careless of myself,

And wholly ignorant of what I was,

I grew up as a reed some wind will touch,

And wake to prophecy—till then all mute,

And void of melody—a foolish weed!

My soul was blind, and all my life was dark,

And all my heart pined with some ignorant want.

I moved about, a shadow in the house,

And felt unwedded though I was a wife;

And all the men and women which I saw

Were but as pictures painted on a wall:

To me they had not either heart, or brain,

Or lips, or language—pictures! nothing more.

Then, suddenly, athwart those lonely hours

Which day by day dream'd listlessly away,

Led to the dark and melancholy tomb,

Thy presence pass'd and touch'd me with a soul.

My life did but begin when I found thee.

Oh what a strength was hidden in this heart!

As, all unvalued, in its cold dark cave

Under snow hills, some rare and priceless gem

May sparkle and burn, so in this life of mine

Love lay shut up. You broke the rock away,

You lit upon the jewel that it hid,

You pluck'd it forth—to wear it, my Beloved !  
 To set it in the crown of thy dear life !  
 To embellish fortune ! Cast it not away.  
 Now call me by the old familiar names :  
 Call me again your Queen, as once you used ;  
 Your large-eyed Herè !

*Ægisthus.*                    Oh, you are a Queen  
 That should have none but gods to rule over !  
 Make me immortal with one costly kiss !

## VIII. CHORUS. ELECTRA. CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Ægisthus.*

*Chorus.* Io ! Io ! I hear the people shout.  
*Electra.* See how these two do mutually confer,  
 Hatching new infamy. Now will he dare,  
 In his unbounded impudence, to meet  
 My father's eyes ? The hour is nigh at hand.

*Clytemnestra.* O love, be bold ! the hour is nigh  
 at hand.

*Electra.* Laden with retribution, lingering slow.

*Ægisthus.* A time in travail with some great dis-  
 tress.

*Clytemnestra.* Nay, rather safety for the rest of time.  
 O love ! O hate !

*Electra.*                    O vengeance !

*Ægisthus.*                    O wild chance !

If favouring fate—

*Clytemnestra.* Despair is more than fate.

*Chorus.* Io ! Io ! The King is on his march.

*Ægisthus.* Did you hear that ?

*Electra.*                    The hour is nigh at hand !

*Clytemnestra.* Leave me to deal with these. I  
know the arts

That guide the doubtful purpose of discourse  
Through many windings to the appointed goal.  
I'll draw them on to such a frame of mind  
As best befits our purpose. You, meanwhile,  
Scatter vague words among the other crowd,  
Lest the event, when it is due, fall foul  
Of unpropitious natures.

*Ægisthus.* Do you fear  
The helpless, blind ill will of such a crowd ?

*Clytemnestra.* He only fears mankind who knows  
them not.

But him I praise not who despises them.  
This man ! . . . the sun of his exceeding glory  
Unclouded shines to melt the waxen wings  
Of our design, and this weak-hearted crowd  
That pours itself in praises ! But anon  
I, like the cold invisible winter's wind,  
Will creep into his crannies with strange frost,  
Wither his summer ere the sere, blow storms  
Upon him, spoil his flaring. Fear not you.  
Trust me, it shall go hard but I'll frost-bite him !  
Whence come, Electra ?

*Electra.* From my father's hearth  
To meet him ; for the hour is nigh at hand.

*Clytemnestra.* So do our hopes race hotly to one  
end,  
(A noble rivalry !) as who shall first  
Embrace this happy fortune. Tarry not.  
We too will follow.

*Electra.* Justice, O be swift !

IX. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS.  
HERALD.

*Clytemnestra.* A froward child ! She's gone. My  
blood's in her.

Her father's, too, looks out of that proud face.  
She is too bold . . . ha, well—Ægisthus ? . . . gone !  
O fate ! to be a woman ! You great gods,  
Why did you fashion me in this soft mould ?  
Give me these lengths of silky hair ? these hands  
Too delicately dimpled ! and these arms  
Too white, too weak ! yet leave the man's heart in me,  
To mar your master-piece—that I should perish,  
Who else had won renown among my peers,  
A man, with men—perchance a god with you,  
Had you but better sex'd me, you blind gods !  
But, as for man, all things are fitting to him.  
He strikes his fellow 'mid the clanging shields,  
And leaps among the smoking walls, and takes  
Some long-hair'd virgin wailing at the shrines,  
Her brethren having fallen ; and you gods  
Commend him, crown him, grant him ample days,  
And dying honour, and an endless peace  
Among the deep Elysian asphodels.  
O fate, to be a woman ! To be led  
Dumb, like a poor mule, at a master's will,  
And be a slave, though bred in palaces,  
And be a fool, though seated with the wise—  
A poor and pitiful fool, as I am now,  
Loving and hating my vain life away !

*Chorus.* These flowers—we pluck'd them

At morning, and took them  
 From bright bees that suck'd them  
 And warm winds that shook them  
 'Neath blue hills that o'er-look them.

*Semi-chorus.* With the dews of the meadow  
 Our rosy warm fingers  
 Sparkle yet, and the shadow  
 Of the summer-cloud lingers  
 In the hair of us singers.

*Second Semi-chorus.* Ere these buds on our altars  
 Fade ; ere the forkt fire,  
 Fed with pure honey falters,  
 And fails ; louder, higher  
 Raise the Pæan !

*First Semi-chorus.* Draw nigher,  
 Stand closer ! First praise we  
 The Father of all.  
 To him the song raise we.  
 Over Heaven's golden wall  
 Let it fall ! Let it fall !

*Second Semi-chorus.* Then Apollo, the king of  
 The lyre and the bow ;  
 Who taught us to sing of  
 The deeds that we know—  
 Deeds well done long ago.

*First Semi-chorus.* Next, of all the Immortals,  
 Athenè's grey eyes ;  
 Who sits throned in our portals,  
 Ever fair, ever wise.

*Second Semi-chorus.* Neither dare we despise  
 To extol the great Herè.

*First Semi-chorus.* And then,

As is due, shall our song  
 Be of those among men  
 Who were brave, who were strong,  
 Who endured.

*Second Semi-chorus.* Then, the wrong  
 Of the Phrygian : and Ilion's false sons :  
 And Scamander's wild wave  
 Through the bleak plain that runs.

*First Semi-chorus.* Then, the death of the brave.  
*Second Semi-chorus.* Last, of whom the Gods save

For new honours in story :  
 With whom, the most blest,  
 May our King now in glory  
 Return to his rest !

*Clytemnestra.* O friends, true hearts, rejoice with  
 me ! This day

Shall crown the hope of ten uncertain years !

*Chorus.* For Agamemnon cannot be far off—

*Clytemnestra.* He comes—and yet—the gods pre-  
 serve us all !

My heart is weak—there's One he brings not back ;  
 Who went with him ; who will not come again ;  
 Whom we shall never see !—

*Chorus.* O Queen, for whom,  
 Lamenting thus, is your great heart cast down ?

*Clytemnestra.* The earliest loved—the early lost !  
 my child—

*Chorus.* Iphigenia ?

*Clytemnestra.* She—my child—

*Chorus.* • —Alas !

That was a terrible necessity !

*Clytemnestra.* Was it necessity ? O pardon, friends,

But in the dark, unsolaced solitude,  
 Wild thoughts come to me, and perplex my heart.  
 This, which you call a dread necessity,  
 Was it a murder or a sacrifice ?

*Chorus.* It was a god that did decree the death.

*Clytemnestra.* 'Tis through the heart the gods do  
 speak to us.

High instincts are the oracles of heaven.  
 Did ever heart—did ever god, before,  
 Suggest such foul infanticidal act ?

*Chorus.* Be comforted ! The universal good  
 Needed this single, individual loss.

*Clytemnestra.* Can all men's good be help'd by  
 one man's crime ?

*Chorus.* He loosed the Greeks from Aulis by that  
 deed.

*Clytemnestra.* O specious argument ! Who gave  
 the Greeks

Such bloody claim upon a virgin's life ?  
 Shall the pure bleed to purge impurity ?  
 A hundred Helens were not worth that death !  
 What ! had the manhood of combinèd Greece,  
 Whose boast was in its untamed strength, no help  
 Better than the spilt blood of one poor girl ?  
 Or, if it were of need that blood should flow,  
 What god ordain'd him executioner ?  
 Was it for him the Armament was plann'd ?  
 For him that angry Greece was leagued in war ?  
 For him, or Menelaus, was this done ?  
 Was the cause his, or Menelaus' cause ?  
 Was he less sire than Menelaus was ?  
 He, too, had children ; did he murder them ?

O, was it manlike ? was it human, even ?

*Chorus.* Alas ! alas ! it was an evil thing.

*Clytemnestra.* O friends, if any one among you all,  
If any be a mother, bear with me !

She was my earliest born, my best beloved.

The painful labour of that perilous birth

That gave her life did almost take my own.

He had no pain. He did not bring her forth.

How should he, therefore, love her as I loved ?

*Chor.* Ai ! ai ! alas ! our tears run down with yours.

*Clytemnestra.* Oh, who shall say with what deli-  
cious tears,

With what ineffable tenderness, while he  
Took his blithe pastime on the windy plain,

Among the ringing camps and neighing steeds,

First of his glad compeers, I sat apart,

Silent, within the solitary house ;

Rocking the little child upon my breast ;

And soothed its soft eyes into sleep with song !

*Chorus.* Ai ! ai ! unhappy, sad, unchilded one !

*Clytemnestra.* Or, when I taught, from inarticu-  
late sounds,

The little lisping lips to breathe his name.

Now they will never breathe that name again !

*Chorus.* Alas ! for Hades hath not any hope,  
Since Thracian women lopp'd the tuneful head  
Of Orpheus, and Heracles is no more.

*Clytemnestra.* Or, spread in prayer the helpless,  
infant hands,

That they, too, might invoke the gods for him.

Alas, who now invokes the gods for her ?

Unwedded, hapless, gone to glut the womb

Of dark, untimely Orcus !

*Chorus.*                           Ai ! alas ! \*

*Clytemnestra.* I would have died, if that could  
be, for her !

When life is half-way set to feeble old,  
And memory more than hope, and to dim eyes  
The gorgeous tapestry of existence shows  
Moth'd, finger'd, fray'd, and bare, 'twere not so hard  
To fling away this ravell'd skein of life,  
Which else, a little later, Fate had cut.  
And who would sorrow for the o'er-blown rose  
Sharp winter strews about its own bleak thorns ?  
But, cropp'd before the time, to fall so young !  
And wither in the gloomy crown of Dis !  
Never to look upon the blessed sun—

*Chorus.* Ailinon ! ailinon ! It was not well.

*Clytemnestra.* And I had dream'd such splendid  
dreams for her !

Who would not so for Agamemnon's child ?  
For we had hoped that she, too, in her time  
Would be the mother of heroic men !

*Chorus.* There rises in my heart an awful fear,  
Lest from these evils darker evils come ;  
For Heaven exacts, for wrong, the uttermost tear,  
And death hath language after life is dumb !

*Clytemnestra.* It works ! it works !

*Chorus.*                           Look, some one comes this way.

*Herald.* O Honour of the House of Tantalus !

The King's wheels echo in the brazen gates.

*Clytemnestra.* •Our heart is half-way there, to wel-  
come him.

How looks he ? Well ? And all our long-lost friends—

Their faces grow before me ! Lead the way  
Where we may meet them. All our haste seems slow.

*Chorus.* Would that he brought his dead child  
back with him !

*Clytemnestra.* Now let him come. The mischief  
works apace !

#### X. CHORUS.

*Chor.* The winds were lull'd in Aulis ; and the day  
Down-sloped, was loitering to the lazy west.  
There was no motion of the glassy bay,  
But all things by a heavy light opprest.  
Windless, cut off upon the destined way—  
Dark shrouds, distinct against the lurid lull—  
Dark ropes hung useless, loose, from mast to hull—  
The black ships lay abreast.  
Not any cloud would cross the hollow skies.  
The distant sea boomi'd faintly. Nothing more.  
They walk'd about upon the yellow shore ;  
Or, lying listless, huddled groups supine,  
With faces turn'd toward the flat sea-spine,  
They plann'd the Phrygian battle o'er and o'er ;  
Till each grew sullen, and would talk no more,  
But sat, dumb-dreaming. Then would some one rise,  
And look up at the high mast-heads with haggard,  
    hopeless eyes.

Wild eyes—and, crowding round, yet wilder eyes—  
And gaping, languid lips ;  
And everywhere that men could see,  
About the black-ribb'd ships,  
Was nothing but the deep-red sea ;

The deep-red shore ;  
The deep-red skies ;  
The deep-red silence, thick with thirsty sighs ;  
And daylight, dying slowly. Nothing more.  
The tall masts stood upright ;  
And not a sail above the burnish'd prores ;  
The languid sea, like one outwearied quite,  
Shrank, dying inward into hollow shores,  
And breathless harbours, under sandy bars ;  
But, rushing swift into the hot broad blue,  
The intense, sultry stars  
Burn'd strong, and singed the simmering welkin thro' ;  
And, all below, the sick and steaming brine  
The spill'd-out sunset did incarnadine.

At last one broke the silence ; and a word  
Was lisp'd and buzz'd about, from mouth to mouth ;  
Pale faces grew more pale ; wild whispers stirr'd ;  
And men, with moody, murmuring lips, conferr'd  
In ominous tones, from shaggy beards uncouth :  
As though some wind had broken from the blurr'd  
And blazing prison of the stagnant drouth,  
And stirr'd the salt sea in the stifled south.  
The long-robed priests stood round ; and, in the gloom,  
Under black brows, their bright and greedy eyes  
Shone deathfully ; there was a sound of sighs,  
Thick-sobb'd from choking throats among the crowd,  
That, whispering, gather'd close, with dark heads  
bow'd ;  
But no man lifted up his voice aloud,  
For heavy hung o'er all the helpless sense of doom.  
Then, after solemn prayer,

The father bade the attendants, tenderly  
Lift her upon the lurid altar-stone.  
There was no hope in any face ; each eye  
Swam tearful, that her own did gaze upon.  
They bound her helpless hands with mournful care ;  
And loop'd up her long hair,  
That hung about her, like an amber shower,  
Mix'd with the saffron robe, and falling lower,  
Down from her bare, and cold, white shoulder flung.  
Upon the heaving breast the pale cheek hung,  
Suffused with that wild light that roll'd among  
The pausing crowd, out of the crimson drouth.  
They held hot hands upon her pleading mouth ;  
And stifled on faint lips the natural cry.  
Back from the altar-stone,  
Slow-moving in his fix'd place  
A little space,  
The speechless father turn'd. No word was said.  
He wrapp'd his mantle close about his face,  
In his dumb grief, without a moan.  
The lopping axe was lifted over-head.  
Then, suddenly,  
There sounded a strange motion of the sea,  
Booming far inland ; and above the east  
A ragged cloud rose slowly, and increased.

Not one line in the horoscope of Time  
Is perfect. O what falling off is this,  
When some grand soul, that else had been sublime,  
Falls unawares amiss,  
And stoops its crested strength to sudden crime !

So gracious a thing is it, and sweet,  
In life's clear centre one true man to see,  
That holds strong nature in a wise control ;  
Throbbing out, all round, the heat  
Of a large and liberal soul.  
No shadow, simulating life,  
But pulses warm with human nature,  
In a soul of godlike stature ;  
Heart, and brain, all rich and ripe  
With noble instincts : strong to meet  
Time calmly, in his purposed place.  
Sound through and through, and all complete ;  
Exalting what is low, and base ;  
Enlarging what is narrow, and small ;  
He stamps his character on all,  
And with his grand identity  
Fills up Creation's eye.  
He will not dream the aimless years away  
In blank delay,  
But makes eternity of to-day,  
And reaps the full-ear'd time. For him  
Nature her affluent horn doth brim,  
To strew with fruits and flowers his way—  
Fruits ripe, and flowers gay.

The clear soul in his earnest eyes  
Looks through and through all plaited lies ;  
Time shall not rob him of his youth  
Nor narrow his large sympathies.  
He is not true, he is a truth,  
And such a truth as never dies.

Who knows his nature, feels his right,  
And, toiling, toils for his delight ;  
Not as slaves toil : where'er he goes,  
The desert blossoms with the rose.  
He trusts himself in scorn of doubt,  
And lets orb'd purpose widen out.  
The world works with him ; all men see  
Some part of them fulfill'd in him ;  
His memory never shall grow dim ;  
He holds the heaven and earth in fee.  
Not following that, fulfilling this,  
He is immortal, for he is !  
O weep ! weep ! weep !  
Weep for the young that die ;  
As it were pale flowers that wither under  
The smiting sun, and fall asunder,  
Before the dews on the grass are dry,  
Or the tender twilight is out of the sky,  
Or the lilies have fall'n asleep ;  
Or ships by a wanton wind cut short,  
And wreck'd in sight of the placid port,  
Sinking strangely, and suddenly—  
Sadly, and strangely, and suddenly—  
Into the black Plutonian deep.  
O weep ! weep ! weep !  
Weep, and bow the head,  
For those whose sun is set at noon :  
Whose night is dark, without a moon :  
Whose aim of life is sped  
Beyond pursuing woes, •  
And the arrow of angry foes,  
To the darkness that no man knows—

The darkness among the dead.  
Let us mourn, and bow the head,  
And lift up the voice, and weep  
For the early dead !  
For the early dead we may bow the head,  
And strike the breast, and weep ;  
But, oh, what shall be said  
For the living sorrow ?  
For the living sorrow our grief—  
Dumb grief—draws no relief  
From tears, nor yet may borrow  
Solace from sound, or speech ;—  
For the living sorrow  
That heaps to-morrow upon to-morrow  
In piled up pain, beyond Hope's reach !  
It is well that we mourn for the early dead,  
Strike the breast, and bow the head ;  
For the sorrow for these may be sung, or said,  
And the chaplets be woven for the fallen head,  
And the urns to the stately tombs be led,  
And love on their memory may be fed,  
And song may ennable the anguish ;  
But, oh, for the living sorrow—  
For the living sorrow what hopes remain ?  
For the prison'd, pining, passionate pain  
That is doom'd for ever to languish,  
And to languish for ever in vain,  
For the want of the words that may bestead  
The hunger that out of loss is bred.  
O friends, for the living sorrow—  
For the living sorrow—  
For the living sorrow what shall be said ?

## XI. A PHOCIAN. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS.

*Phocian.* O noble strangers, if indeed you be  
 Such as you seem, of Argos, and the land  
 That the unconquer'd Agamemnon rules,  
 Tell me is this the palace, these the roofs  
 Of the Atridae, famed in ancient song ?

*Chorus.* Not without truth you name the neighbourhood,  
 Standing before the threshold, and the doors  
 Of Pelops, and upon the Argive soil.  
 That which you see above the Agora  
 Is the famed temple of the Lycian God,  
 And this the house of Agamemnon's queen.  
 But whence art thou ? For if thy dusty locks,  
 And those soil'd sandals show with aught of truth,  
 Thou shouldst be come from far.

*Phocian.* And am so, friends,  
 But, by Heaven's favour, here my journey ends.

*Chorus.* Whence, then, thy way ?

*Phocian.* From Phocis ; charged with gifts  
 For Agamemnon, and with messages  
 From Strophius, and the sister of your king.  
 Our watchmen saw the beacon on the hills,  
 And leap'd for joy. Say, is the king yet come ?

*Chorus.* He comes this way ; stand by, I hear  
 them shout.

Here shall you meet him, as he mounts the hill.

*Phocian.* Now blest be all the Gods, from Father  
 Zeus,

Who reigns o'er windy Eta, far away,  
 To King Apollo, with the golden horns.

*Chorus.* Look how they cling about him ! Far,  
and near,  
The town breaks loose, and follows after,  
Crowding up the ringing ways.  
The boy forgets to watch the steer ;  
The grazing steer forgets to graze ;  
The shepherd leaves the herd ;  
The priest will leave the fane ;  
The deep heart of the land is stirr'd  
To sunny tears, and tearful laughter,  
To look into his face again.  
Burst, burst the brazen gates !  
Throw open the hearths, and follow !  
Let the shouts of the youths go up to Apollo,  
Lord of the graceful quiver :  
Till the tingling sky dilates—  
Dilates, and palpitates ;  
And, Pæan ! Pa-an ! the virgins sing ;  
Pæan ! Pæan ! the king ! the king !  
Laden with spoils from Phrygia !  
Io ! Io ! Io ! they sing  
Till the pillars of Olympus ring ;  
Io ! to Queen Ortygia,  
Whose double torch shall burn for ever !  
But thou, O Lord of the graceful quiver,  
Bid, bid thy Pythian Splendour halt,  
Nor quench too soon the sacred light  
That gives awhile to mortal sight  
The image of a land's content !  
So with increased acclaim thou shalt  
Take full farewell of moments spent  
Not vainly, when with course down-bent

The golden-harness'd horses bright  
 By happy shouts are homeward sent  
 To pace in peace the nether vault,  
 And thou, released from labour quite  
 Beyond the sea-girt continent  
 Dost stall thy steeds in sable night.  
 Let not the breathless air grow dim,  
 Until the whole land look at him!

*Semi-chorus.* Stand back!

*Semi-chorus.* Will he come this way?

*Semi-chorus.* No; by us.

*Semi-chorus.* Gods, what a crowd!

*Semi-chorus.* How firm the old men walk!

*Semi-chorus.* There goes the King. I know him  
 by his beard.

*Semi-chorus.* And I, too, by the manner of his gait.

He treads the earth as though not earthly he,  
 But one whose wont is with the gods to walk  
 Along the winds of heaven above the clouds.

*Semi-chorus.* How grey he looks!

*Semi-chorus.* His cheek is seam'd with scars.

*Semi-chorus.* What a bull's front!

*Semi-chorus.* He stands up like a tower.

*Semi-chorus.* Ay, like some moving tower of ar-  
 mèd men,

That carries conquest under city-walls.

*Semi-chorus.* He lifts his sublime head, and in his  
 port

Bears eminent authority.

*Semi-chorus.* Behold, \*

His spear shows like the spindle of a Fate!

*Semi-chorus.* Oh, what an arm!

*Semi-chorus.*                    Most fit for such a sword ;  
 Look at that sword.

*Semi-chorus.*                    What shoulders !

*Semi-chorus.*                    What a throat !

*Semi-chorus.* What are these bearing ?

*Semi-chorus.*                    Urns.

*Semi-chorus.*                    Alas ! alas !

*Semi-chorus.* O friends, look here ! how are the  
 mighty men

Shrunk up into a little vase of earth,  
 A child might lift. Sheath'd each in brazen plates,  
 They went so heavy, they come back so light,  
 Sheath'd, each one, in the brazen urn of death !

*Semi-ch.* With what a stateliness he moves along !

*Semi-chorus.* See, how they touch his skirt, and  
 grasp his hand !

*Semi-chorus.* Is that the Queen ?

*Semi-chorus.*                    Ay, how she matches him !

With what grand eyes she looks up, full in his !

*Semi-chorus.* Say, what are these ?

*Semi-chorus.* Oh, Phrygians ! how they walk !  
 The only sad men in the crowd, I think.

*Semi-chorus.* But who is this, that with such  
 scornful brows,

And looks averted, walks among the rest ?

*Semi-chorus.* I know not, but some Phrygian wo-  
 man, sure.

*S.-ch.* Her heavy-fallen hair down her white neck  
 (A dying sunbeam tangled in each tress)  
 All its neglected beauty pours one way.

*Semi-ch.* Her looks bend ever on the alien ground.  
 As though the stones of Troy were in her path ;

And in the painèd paleness of her brow  
Sorrow hath made a regal tenement.

*Semi-ch.* Here comes Electra ; young Orestes, too ;  
See, how he emulates his father's stride !

*Semi-ch.* Look at Ægisthus, where he walks apart,  
And bites his lip.

*Semi-chorus.* I oft have seen him so  
When something chafes him in his bitter moods.

*Semi-chorus.* Peace, here they come !

*Chorus.* Io ! Io ! The King

XII. AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGISTHUS,  
ELECTRA, ORESTES, CASSANDRA, A PHOCIAN,  
CHORUS, SEMI-CHORUS, and others in the procession.

*Clytem.* O blazing sun, that in thy skyey tower  
Pausedst to see one kingly as thyself,  
Lend all thy brightest beams to light his head,  
And gild our gladness ! Friends, behold the King !  
Now hath Ætolian Jove, the arbiter  
Of conquests, well disposed the issues here.  
For every night that brought not news from Troy  
Heap'd fear on fear, as waves succeed to waves,  
When northern blasts blow white the Cretan main—  
Knowing that thou, remote, from toil to toil  
Climbedst, uncertain. Unto such an one  
His children, and young offspring of the house,  
Are as a field, which he, the husbandman,  
Owning far off, doth only look upon  
At seed time once, nor then till harvest comes ;  
And his sad wife must wet with mighty tears  
Unsolaced pillows, fearing for his fate.  
To these how welcome, then, his glad return,

When he, as thou, comes heavy with the weight  
Of great achievements, and the spoils of time.

*Agamemnon.* Enough ! enough ! we weigh you at  
full worth,

And hold you dear, nor less than you rejoice ;  
But women ever err by over-talk.

Silence to women, as the beard to men,  
Brings honour ; and plain truth is hurt, not help'd,  
By many words. To each his separate sphere  
The gods allot. To me the sounding camp,  
Steeds, and the oaken spear ; to you the hearth,  
Children, and household duties of the loom.  
'Tis man's to win an honourable name ;  
Woman's to keep it honourable still.

*Clytemnestra.* (O beast ! O weakness of this wo-  
manhood !

To let these pompous male things strut in our eyes,  
And in their lordship lap themselves secure,  
Because the lots in life are fallen to them !  
Am I less heart and head, less blood and brain,  
Less force and feeling, pulse and passion—I—  
Than this self-worshipper—a lie all through ?)  
Forgive, if joy too long unloose our lips,  
Silent so long : your words fall on my soul  
As rain on thirsty lands, that feeds the dearth  
With blessed nourishment. My whole heart hears.  
You speaking thus, I would be silent ever.

*Agamemnon.* Who is this man ?

*Clytemnestra.* A Phocian, by his look.

*Phocian.* O King, from Strophius, and your sis-  
ter's court,

Despatch'd with this seal'd tablet, and with gifts ;

Though both express, so says my royal Head,  
But poorly the rich welcome they intend.  
Will you see this?—and these?

*Agamemnon.* Anon! anon!

We'll look at them within. O child, thine eyes  
Look warmer welcome than all words express.  
Thou art mine own child by that royal brow.  
Nature hath mark'd thee mine.

*Electra.* O Father!

*Agamemnon.* Come!

And our Orestes! He is nobly grown.  
He shall do great deeds when our own are dim.  
So shall men come to say “the father's sword  
~~In the son's hands~~ hath hewn out nobler fame.”  
Think of it, little one! Where is our cousin?

*Egisthus.* Here! And the keys of the Acropolis?

*Agamemnon.* O well! this dust and heat are over-much.

And, cousin, you look pale. Anon! anon!  
Speak to us by and by. Let business wait.  
Is our house order'd? we will take the bath.

*Clytemnestra.* Will you within? where all is order'd fair

Befitting state: cool chambers, marble-floor'd  
Or piled with blazing carpets, scented rare  
With the sweet spirit of each odorous gum  
In dim, delicious, amorous mists about  
The purple-paven, silver-sided bath,  
Deep, flashing, pure.

*Agamemnon.* Look to our captives then.  
I charge you chiefly with this woman here,  
Cassandra, the mad prophetess of Troy.  
See that you chafe her not in her wild moods.

## XIII. CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGISTHUS.

*Clytemnestra.* Linger not !

*Ægisthus.* What ? you will to-day—

*Clytemnestra.* —This hour.

*Ægisthus.* Oh, if some chance mar all !

*Clytemnestra.* We'll make chance sure.

Doubt is the doomsman of self-judged Disgrace :

But every chance brings safety to self-help.

*Ægisthus.* Ay, but the means—the time—

*Clytemnestra.* —Fulfil themselves.

O most irresolute heart ! is this a time  
 When, through the awful pause of life, distinct,  
 The sounding shears of Fate slope near, to stand  
 Meek, like tame wethers, and be shorn ? How say you ?  
 The blithe wind up, and the broad sea before him,  
 Who would crouch all day long beside the mast,  
 Counting the surges beat his idle helm,  
 Because between him and the golden isles  
 The shadow of a passing storm might hang ?  
 Danger, being pregnant, doth beget resolve.

*Ægisthus.* Thou wert not born to fail. Give me  
 thy hand.

*Clytemnestra.* Take it.

*Ægisthus.* It does not tremble.

*Clytemnestra.* O be strong !

The future hangs upon the die we cast :

Fortune plays high for us—

*Ægisthus.* • Gods grant she win !

OLYMPIESTRA.

XIV. CHORUS. CASSANDRA.

*Chorus.* O thou that dost with globèd glory  
Sweep the dark world at noon of night,  
Or among snowy summits, wild and hoary,  
Or through the mighty silences  
Of immemorial seas,  
With all the stars behind thee flying white !  
O take with thee, where'er  
Thou wanderest, ancient Care,  
And hide her in some interlunar haunt ;  
Where but the wild bird's chaunt  
At night, through rocky ridges gaunt,  
Or moanings of some homeless sea may find her.  
There, Goddess, bar, and bind her ;  
Where she may pine, but wander not ;  
Loathe her haunts, but leave them not ;  
Wail and rave to the wind and wave  
That hear, yet understand her not ;  
And curse her chains, yet cleave them not ;  
And hate her lot, yet help it not.  
Or let her rove with Gods undone  
Who dwell below the setting sun,  
And the sad Western Hours  
That burn in fiery bowers ;  
Or in Amphitrite's grot  
Where the vexèd tides unite,  
And the spent wind, howling, breaks  
O'er sullen oceans out of sight  
Among sea-snakes, that the white moon wakes  
Till they shake themselves into diamond flakes,  
Coil and twine in the glittering brine,

And swing themselves in the long moonshine ;  
Or by wild shores hoarsely rage,  
And moan and vent her spite,  
In some inhospitable harbourage  
Of Thracian waters, white.  
There let her grieve and grieve, and hold her breath,  
Until she hate herself to death.  
I seem with rapture lifted higher,  
Like one in mystic trance.  
O Pan ! Pan ! Pan !  
First friend of man,  
And founder of Heaven's choir,  
Come thou from old Cyllenè, and inspire  
The Gnossian, and Nysæan dance !  
Come thou, too, Delian king,  
From the blue Ægean sea,  
And Mycone's yellow coast :  
Give my spirit such a wing  
As there the foolish Icarus lost,  
That she may soar above the cope  
Of this high pinnacle of gladness,  
And dizzy height of hope ;  
And there, beyond all reach of sadness,  
May tune my lips to sing  
Great Pæans, full and free,  
Till the whole world ring  
With such heart-melting madness  
As bards are taught by thee !

*Semi-chorus.* Look to the sad Cassandra, how she  
stands ! •

*Semi-chorus.* She turns not from the wringing of  
her hands.

We would console you.

*Semi-chorus.* Look, how she is moved !

*Semi-chorus.* O speak ! the heart's hurt oft is  
help'd by words.

*Cassandra.* O Itys ! Itys ! Itys !

*Semi-chorus.* What a shriek !

She takes the language of the nightingale,  
Unhappy bird ! that mourns her perish'd form,  
And leans her breast against a thorn, all night.

*Cassandra.* The bull is in the shambles.

*Semi-chorus.* Listen, friends !

She mutters something to herself.

*Cassandra.* Alas !

Did any name Apollo ? woe is me !

*Semi-chorus.* She calls upon the God.

*Semi-chorus.* Unhappy one,

What sorrow strikes thee with bewilderment ?

*Semi-chorus.* Now she is mute again.

*Chorus.* A Stygian cold  
Now loosens all my limbs and bites my heart  
Like a dividing dart :

O'er me a cloud from sooty Acheron creeps,  
That both mine eyelids heaps  
With gloomy horror and infernal night,  
Quenching in darkness of the nether deeps  
Joy's soon-confounded light.

O dread and wise Prophetic Powers,  
Whose strong-compelling law  
Doth hold in awe  
The labouring hours,  
Your intervention I invoke,  
My soul from strangling doubts to save ;  
Whether you have  
Your dwelling in some dark oracular cave,  
Or solemn, sacred oak,  
Whose shadowy boughs above  
Sat the wise dove  
With swarthy wing, flown out of Thebes, and told  
By sovran Zeus of time and fate to teach  
The minds of men, and mysteries manifold,  
In dim Dodona's ancient honour'd grove ;  
Or if the tuneful voice of old  
Awake in Delos, to unfold  
Dark wisdom, guarded by ambiguous speech ;  
Where, from the blighted beach  
Of earth's hail-beaten Hyperborean shore,  
The mystic maidens bore  
The mighty Images, and round them wove

The wheaten straw, supine on cloudy mountains cold,  
In streaming vapour roll'd ;  
Whom yet with locks of hair  
Shorn for their sepulchres,  
And sea-bank myrtle boughs for ever fair  
That round their shrines do gleam  
When all the woods are bare,  
The simple islanders  
Yearly adore. O dread and wise, where'er  
Ye dwell, that can declare  
Things hidden, hasten to the need extreme  
Of this distracted hour ! our hopes repair,  
Resolve our doubts, and show what Fate doth scheme !  
For on the dizzy verge of steep despair  
Our spirits struggle, and to ourselves we seem  
Like men that, dreaming, know indeed they dream,  
But yet from slumber cannot cast out care,  
Harrowing the ominous air  
With sorrowful breath.  
Above, beneath,  
Now doth the intense abysmal silence teem  
With soul-dismaying terrors. O declare  
What dismal deed doth Fate prepare ?  
What hidden, horrible thing is hatching there  
Behind disastrous doors  
Close shut on deathful Treason-trodden floors  
Of secret chambers, where  
Of some strange horror hid my heart is half aware ?

## XV. CLYTEMNESTRA. CASSANDRA. CHORUS.

*Clytemnestra.* One blow makes all sure. Ay, but  
then—beyond?

I cannot trammel up the future thus,  
And so forecast the time, as with one blow  
To break the hundred Hydra-heads of Chance.  
Beyond—beyond I dare not look. For who,  
If first he scann'd the space, would leap the gulf?  
One blow secures the moment. Oh, but he . . . .  
Ay, there it lies! I dread lest my love, being  
So much the stronger, scare his own to death;  
As what they comprehend not, men abhor.  
He has a wavering nature, easily  
Unpois'd; and trembling ever on extremes.  
Oh, what if terror outweigh love, and love,  
Having defiled his countenance, take part  
Against himself, self-loathed, a fallen god?  
Ah, his was never yet the loving soul,  
But rather that which lets itself be loved;  
As some loose lily leans upon a lake,  
Letting the lymph reflect it, as it will,  
Still idly sway'd, whichever way the stream  
Stirs the green tangles of the water-moss.  
The flower of his love never bloom'd upright:—  
But a sweet parasite, that loved to lean  
On stronger natures, winning strength from them—  
Not such a flower as whose delirious cup  
Maddens the bee, and never can give forth  
Enough of fragrance, yet is ever sweet.  
Yet which is sweetest—to receive or give?

Sweet to receive, and sweet to give, in love !  
When one is never sated that receives,  
Nor ever all exhausted one that gives.  
I think I love him more, that I resemble  
So little aught that pleases me in him.  
Perchance, if I dared question this dark heart,  
'Tis not for him, but for myself in him,  
For that which is my softer self in him—  
I have done this, and this—and shall do more :  
Hoped, wept, dared wildly, and will overcome !  
Does he not need me ? It is sweet to think  
That I am all to him, whate'er I be  
To others ; and to one—little, I know !  
But to him, all things—sceptre, sword, and crown !  
For who would live, but to be loved by some one ?  
Be fair, but to give beauty to another ?  
Or wise, but to instruct some sweet desire ?  
Or strong, but that thereby love may rejoice ?  
Or who for crime's sake would be criminal ?  
And yet for love's sake would not dare wild deeds ?  
A mutual necessity, one fear,  
One hope, and the strange posture of the time  
Unite us now ;—but this need over-past,  
Oh, if, 'twixt his embrace and mine, there rise  
The reflex of a murder'd head ! and he,  
Remembering the crime, remember not  
It was for him that I am criminal,  
But rather hate me for the part he took—  
Against his soul, as he will say—in this ?—  
I will not think it. Upon this wild venture,  
Freighted with love's last wealthiest merchandise,  
My heart sets forth. To-morrow I shall wake

A beggar, as it may be, or thrice rich.  
 As one who plucks his last gem from his crown  
 (Some pearl for which, in youth, he barter'd states)  
 And, sacrificing with an anxious heart,  
 Toward night puts seaward in a little bark  
 For lands reported far beyond the sun,  
 Trusting to win back kingdoms, or there drown—  
 So I—and with like perilous endeavour !  
 Oh, but I think I could implore the Gods  
 More fervently than ever, in my youth,  
 I pray'd that help of Heaven I needed not,  
 And lifted innocent hands to their great sky.  
 So much to lose . . . so much to gain . . . so much . . .  
 I dare not think how . . .

Ha, the Phrygian slave !

He dares to bring his mistress to the hearth !  
 She looks unhappy. I will speak to her.  
 Perchance her hatred may approve my own,  
 And help me in the work I am about.  
 'Twere well to sound her.

Be not so cast down,

Unhappy stranger ! Fear no jealous hand.  
 In sorrow I, too, am not all untried.  
 Our fortunes are not so dissimilar :  
 Slaves both—and of one master.

Nay, approach !

Is my voice harsh in its appeal to thee ?  
 If so, believe me, it belies my heart.  
 A woman speaks to thee.

What, silent still ?

O look not on me with such sullen eyes,  
 There is no accusation in my own.

Rather on him that brought thee, than on thee,  
Our scorn is settled. I would help thee. Come !  
Mute still ?

I know that shame is ever dumb,  
And ever weak ; but here is no reproach.  
Listen ! Thy fate is given to thy hands.  
Art thou a woman, and dost scorn contempt ?  
Art thou a captive, and dost loathe these bonds ?  
Art thou courageous, as men call thy race ?  
Or, helpless art thou, and wouldest overcome ?  
If so—look up ! For there is hope for thee.  
Give me thy hand—

*Cassandra.* Pah ! there is blood on it !

*Clytemnestra.* What is she raving of ?

*Cassandra.* The place, from old,  
Is evil.

*Clytemnestra.* Ay, there is a sickness, here,  
That needs the knife.

*Cassandra.* Oh, horrible ! blood ! blood !

*Clytemnestra.* I see you are a Phrygian to the  
bone !

Coward, and slave ! be so for evermore !

*Cassandra.* Apollo ! O Apollo ! O blood ! blood !  
The whole place swims with it ! The slippery steps  
Steam with the fumes ! The rank air smells of blood !

*Clytemnestra.* Heed her not ! for she knows not  
what she says.

This is some falling sickness of the soul.

Her fever frights itself.

*Cassandra.* It reeks ! it reeks !  
It smokes ! it stifles ! blood ! blood, everywhere !

*Clytemnestra.* See, he hath brought this mad woman from Troy,

To shame our honour, and insult our care.

Look to her, friends, my hands have other work !

*Chorus.* Alas, the House of Tantalus is doom'd !

*Clytemnestra.* The King sleeps—like an infant.

His huge strength

Holds slumber thrice as close as other men.

How well he sleeps ! Make garlands for the gods.

I go to watch the couch. Cull every flower,

And honour all the tutelary faunes

With sacrifice as ample as our joy,

Lest some one say we reverence not the gods !

*Chorus.* O doom'd House and race !

O toilsome, toilsome horsemanship

Of Pelops ; that ill omen brought to us !

For since the drownèd Myrtilus

Did from his golden chariot slip

To his last sleep, below the deep,

Nothing of sad calanitous disgrace

Hath angry Heaven ceased to heap

On this unhappy House of Tantalus.

Not only upon sacred leaves of old,

Preserved in many a guarded, mystic fold,

But sometimes, too, enroll'd

On tablets fair

Of stone, or brass, with quaint and curious care,

In characters of gold,

The wisdom of the wise is writ ;

And hardly shall a man,

For all he can,

By painful, slow degrees,  
And nightly reveries  
Of long, laborious thought, grow learn'd in these.  
But who, that in the wily eye  
Of a woman seeks to pry,  
Shall say what evil lurks in it?  
Or fathom her false wit?  
Such tender-cruel treachery  
Inhabits there,  
And, falsely fair,  
In lying light doth softly smiling sit.  
For by a woman fell the man  
Who did Nemæa's pest destroy,  
And the brinded Hydra slew,  
And many other wonders wrought.  
By a woman, fated Troy  
Was overset, and fell to nought.  
Royal Amphiaraus, too,  
All his wisdom could not free  
From his false Eriphyle,  
Whom a golden necklace bought—  
So hath it been, and so shall be,  
Ever since the world began!

O woman, woman, of what other earth  
Hath dædal Nature moulded thee?  
Thou art not of our clay compact,  
Not of our common clay;—  
But when the painful world in labour lay—  
Labour long—and agony, •  
In her heaving throes distract,  
And vext with angry Heaven's red ire,

Nature, kneading snow and fire,  
In thy mystic being pent  
Each contrary element ;  
Life and death within thee blent ;  
All despair and all desire ;  
There to mingle and ferment.  
While, mad midwives, at thy birth  
Furies mixt with Sirens bent,  
Inter-wreathing snakes and smiles—  
Fairest dreams and falsest guiles !

Such a splendid mischief thou !  
With thy light of languid eyes :  
And thy bosom of pure snow :  
And thine heart of fire below,  
Whose red light doth come and go  
Ever o'er thy changeful cheek  
When love-whispers tremble weak :  
Thy warm lips and pensive sighs,  
That the breathless spirit bow :  
And the heavenward life that lies  
In the still serenities  
Of thy snowy, airy brow—  
Thine ethereal airy brow.  
Such a splendid mischief, thou !  
What are all thy witcheries ?  
All thine evil beauty ? all  
Thy soft looks, and subtle smiles ?  
Tangled tresses ? mad caresses ?  
Tenderesses ? tears and kisses ?  
And the long look, between whiles  
That the helpless heart beguiles,

Tranced in such a subtle thrall ?  
 What are all thy sighs and smiles ?  
 Fairest dreams and falsest guiles !  
 Hoofs to horses, teeth to lions,  
 Horns to bulls, and speed to hares,  
 To the fish to glide through waters,  
 To the bird to glide through airs,  
 Nature gave : to men gave courage,  
 And the use of brazen spears.  
 What was left to give to woman,  
 All her gifts thus given ? Ah, tears,  
 Smiles, and kisses, whispers, glances,  
 Only these ; and merely beauty  
 On her archèd brows unfurl'd.  
 And with these she shatters lances,  
 All unarm'd binds armèd Duty,  
 And in triumph drags the world !

XVI. SEMI-CHORUS. CHORUS. CASSANDRA. AGAMEMNON. CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGISTHUS.

*Semi-chorus.* Break off, break off ! It seems I  
 heard a cry !

*Chorus.* Surely one call'd within the house.

*Semi-chorus.* Stand by.

*Chorus.* The Prophetess is troubled. Look, her eye  
 Rolls fearfully.

*Semi-chorus.* Now all is husht once more.

*Chorus.* I hear the feet of some one at the door.

(Agamemnon, within.) Murdress ! oh, oh !

*Semi-chorus.* The house is fill'd with shrieks.

*Chorus.* The sound deceives or that was the King's  
 voice.

*Semi-chorus.* The voice of Agamemnon !

(*Agamemnon, within.*) Ai ! ai ! ai !

*Cassandra.* The bull is in the toils.

(*Agamemnon, within.*) I will not die !

(*Ægisthus, within.*) O Zeus ! he will escape !

(*Clytemnestra, within.*) He has it.

(*Agamemnon, within.*) Ai ! ai !

*Chorus.* Some hideous deed is being done within.

Burst in the doors !

*Semi-chorus.* I cannot open them.

Barr'd, barr'd within !

*Cassandra.* The axe is at the bull !

*Chorus.* Call the elders.

*Semi-ch.* And the People. O Argives ! Argives !

Ailinon ! ailinon !

*Chorus.* You to the Agora.

*Semi-chorus.* To the temples we.

*Chorus.* Hearken, O maidens !

*Semi-chorus.* This way.

*Chorus.* That way.

*Semi-chorus.* Quick ! quick !

*Cassandra.* Seal my sight, O Apollo ! O Apollo !

*Chorus.* To the Agora !

*Semi-chorus.* To the temples !

*Chorus.* Haste ! haste !

(*Agamemnon, within.*) Stabb'd, oh !

*Chorus.* Too late !

*Cassandra.* The bull is bellowing.

(*Ægisthus, within.*) Thrust there again !

(*Clytemnestra, within.*) One blow has done it all.

(*Ægisthus, within.*) Is it quite through ?

(*Clytemnestra, within.*) He will not move again.

*Semi-chorus.* O Heaven, and Earth ! My heart  
stands still with awe !  
Where will this murder end ?

*Chorus.* Hold ! some one comes !

### XVII. ELECTRA. ORESTES. CHORUS. A PHOCIAN.

(*Electra leading Orestes.*) Save us ! save him—  
Orestes !

*Chorus.* What has fall'n ?

*Electra.* An evil thing. Oh, we are fatherless !

*Chorus.* Ill-starr'd Electra ! But how fell this  
chance ?

*Electra.* Here is no time for words—scarce time  
for flight.

When from his royal bath the King would rise—  
That devilish woman, lying long in lurk,  
Behind him crept, with stealthy feet unheard,  
And flung o'er all his limbs a subtle web.  
Caught in the craft of whose contrivèd folds,  
Stumbling, he fell. Agisthus seized a sword ;  
But halted, half irresolute to strike.  
My father, like a lion in the toils,  
Upheaved his head, and, writhing, roar'd with wrath,  
And angry shame at this infernal snare.  
Almost he rent the blinding nets atwain.  
But Clytemnestra on him flung herself,  
And caught the steel, and smit him through the ribs.  
He slipp'd, and reel'd. She drove the weapon through,  
Piercing the heart. \*

*Chorus.* O woe ! what tale is this ?

*Elec.* I, too, with him, had died, but for this child,

**And that high vengeance which is yet to be.**

*Chorus.* Alas ! then Agamemnon is no more,  
Who stood, but now, amongst us, full of life,  
Crown'd with achieving years ! The roof and cope  
Of honour, fall'n ! Where shall we lift our eyes ?  
Where set renown ? Where garner up our hopes ?  
All worth is dying out. The land is dark,  
And Treason walks abroad in the eclipse.  
He did not die the death of men that live  
Such life as he lived, fall'n among his peers,  
Whom the red battle roll'd away, while yet  
The shout of gods was ringing through and through  
them :

But Death, that fear'd to front him in full field,  
Lurk'd by the hearth and smote him from behind.  
A mighty man is gone. A mighty grief  
Remains. And rumour of undying deeds  
For song, and legend, to the end of time !  
What tower is strong ?

*Electra.*                    O friends—if friends you be—  
For who shall say where falsehood festers not,  
Those being falsest, who should most be true?  
Where is that Phocian? Let him take the boy,  
And bear him with him to his master's court.  
Else will *Ægisthus* slay him.

*Orestes.* I am Agamemnon's son.

*Chorus.* Therefore shouldst fear—

*Orestes.* And therefore cannot fear.

*Phocian.* I heard a cry. Did any call?

You happen this way in the need of time.

*Electra.* O loyal stranger, Agamemnon's child  
Is fatherless. This boy appeals to you.  
O save him, save him from his father's foes !

*Pho.* Unhappy lady, what wild words are these ?  
*Elec.* The house runs blood. Ægisthus, like a fiend,  
Is raging loose, his weapon dripping gore.

*Chorus.* The King is dead.

*Phocian.*

Is dead !

*Electra.*

Dead.

*Phocian.*

Do I dream ?

*Electra.* Such dreams are dream'd in hell—such  
dreams—oh no !

Is not the earth as solid—heaven above—  
The sun in heaven—and Nature at her work—  
And men at theirs—the same ? Oh, no ! no dream !  
We shall not wake—nor he ; though the gods sleep !  
Unnaturally murder'd—

*Phocian.*

Murder'd !

*Electra.*

Ay.

And the sun blackens not ; the world holds fast ;  
The fires of the red west are not put out.  
Is not the cricket singing in the grass ?  
And the shy lizard shooting through the leaves ?  
I hear the ox low in the labour'd field.  
Those swallows build, and are as garrulous  
High up i' the towers. Yet I speak the truth !  
By heaven, I speak the truth—

*Phocian.*

Yet more, vouchsafe.

How died the King ?

*Electra.* Oh, there shall be a time  
For words hereafter. While we dally here,

Fate hunts and hounds us. Friend, receive this boy.  
 Bear him to Strophius. All this tragedy  
 Relate as best you may; it beggars speech.  
 Tell him a tower of hope is fall'n this day—  
 A name in Greece—

*Phocian.*            —But you—

*Electra.*            Away! away!

Destruction posts apace, while we delay.

*Phocian.* Come then!

*Electra.* I dare not leave my father's hearth,  
 For who would then do honour to his urn?  
 It may be that my womanhood and youth  
 May help me here. It may be I shall fall,  
 And mix my own with Agamemnon's blood.  
 No matter. On Orestes hangs the hope  
 Of all this House. Him save for better days,  
 And ripen'd vengeance.

*Phocian.*            Noble-hearted one!  
 Come then, last offering of this fated race.  
 The future calls thee!

*Orestes.*            Sister! Sister!

*Electra.*            Go!

*Orestes.* O sister!

*Electra.*            O my brother! . . . One last kiss—  
 One last long kiss—how I have loved thee, boy!  
 Was it for this I nourish'd thy young years  
 With stately tales, and legends of the gods?  
 For this? . . . How the past crowds upon me! Ah—  
 Wilt thou recall, in lonely, lonely hours,  
 How once we sat together on still eves  
 (Ah me!) and brooded on all serious themes  
 Of sweet, and high, and beautiful, and good,

That throng the ancient years. Alcmena's son,  
 And how his life went out in fire on Eta ;  
 Or of that bright-hair'd wanderer after fame,  
 That brought the great gold-fleece across the sea,  
 And left a name in Colchis ; or we spake  
 Of the wise Theseus, councils, kingdoms, thrones,  
 And laws in distant lands ; or, later still,  
 Of the great leaguer set round Ilion,  
 And what heart-stirring tidings of the war  
 Bards brought to Hellas. But when I would breathe  
 Thy father's name, didst thou not grasp my hand,  
 And glorious deeds shone round us like the stars  
 That lit the dark world from a great way off,  
 And died up into heaven, among the gods ?

*Orestes.* Sister, O sister !

*Electra.* Ah, too long we linger.

Away ! away !

*Phocian.* Come !

*Chorus.* Heaven go with thee !  
 To Crissa points the hand of Destiny.

*Elec.* O boy, on thee Fate hangs an awful weight  
 Of retribution ! Let thy father's ghost  
 For ever whisper in thine ear. Be strong.  
 About thee, yet unborn, thy mother wove  
 The mystic web of life in such-like form  
 That Agamemnon's spirit in thine eyes  
 Seems living yet. His seal is set on thee ;  
 And Pelops' ivory shoulder marks thee his.  
 Thee, child, nor contests on the Isthmian plain,  
 Nor sacred apple, nor green laurel-leaf,  
 But graver deeds await. Forget not, son,  
 Whose blood, unwash'd, defiles thy mother's doors !

*Chorus.* O haste ! I hear a sound within the house.

*Electra.* Farewell, then, son of Agamemnon !

*Phocian.* Come !

### XVIII. ELECTRA. CHORUS. ÆGISTHUS.

*Electra.* Gone ! gone ! Ah saved ! . . . Oh fool, thou missest, here !

*Chorus.* Alas, Electra, whither wilt thou go ?

*Electra.* Touch me not ! Come not near me !  
Let me be !

For this day, which I hoped for, is not mine.

*Chor.* See how she gathers round her all her robe,  
And sits apart with grief. Oh, can it be  
Great Agamemnon is among the shades ?

*Electra.* Would I had grasp'd his skirt, and fol-  
low'd him !

*Chorus.* Alas ! there is an eminence of joy,  
Where Fate grows dizzy, being mounted there,  
And so tilts over on the other side !

O fallen, O fallen  
The tower which stood so high !  
Whose base and girth were strong i' the earth,  
Whose head was in the sky !  
O fall'n that tower of noble power,  
That fill'd up every eye !

He stood so sure, that noble tower !  
To make secure, and fill with power,  
From length to length, the land of Greece !  
In whose strong bulwarks all men saw,

Garner'd on the lap of law,  
For dearth, or danger, spears of war,  
And harvest sheaves of peace !  
O fall'n, O fall'n that lofty tower—  
The loftiest tower in Greece !

His brows he lift above the noon,  
Fill'd with the day, a noble tower !  
Who took the sunshine, and the shower,  
And flung them back in merry scorn.  
Who now shall stand when tempests lower ?  
He was the first to catch the morn,  
The last to see the moon.  
O friends, he was a noble tower !  
O friends, and fall'n so soon !

Ah, well ! lament ! lament !  
His walls are rent, his bulwarks bent,  
And stoop'd that crested eminence,  
Which stood so high for our defence !  
For our defence—to guard, and fence  
From all alarm of hurt and harm,  
The fulness of a land's content !  
O fall'n away, fall'n at mid-day,  
And set before the sun is down,  
The highest height of our renown !  
O overthrown, the ivory throne !  
The spoils of war, the golden crown,  
And chieftest honour of the state !  
O mourn with me ! what tower is free  
From over-topping destiny ?  
What strength is strong to fate ?

O mourn with me ! when shall we see  
 Another such, so good, so great ?  
 Another such, to guard the state ?

*Ægisthus.* He should have staid to shout through  
 Troy, or bellow

With bulls in Ida—

*Chorus.* Look ! *Ægisthus* comes !  
 Like some lean tiger, having dipt in blood  
 His dripping fangs, and hot athirst for more.  
 His lurid eye-ball rolls, as though it swam  
 Through sanguine films. He staggers, drunk with rage  
 And crazy mischief.

*Ægisthus.* Hold ! let no one stir !  
 I charge you, all of you, who hear me speak.  
 Where may the boy Orestes lie conceal'd ?  
 I hold the life of each in gage for his.  
 If any know where now he hides from us,  
 Let him beware, not rendering true reply !

*Chorus.* The boy is fled—

*Electra.* —is saved !

*Ægisthus.* Electra here !  
 How mean you ? What is this ?

*Electra.* Enough is left  
 Of Agamemnon's blood to drown you in.

*Ægisthus.* You shall not trifle with me, by my  
 beard !

There's peril in this pastime. Where's the boy ?

*Electra.* Halfway to Phocis, Heaven helping him.

*Ægisthus.* By the black Styx !

*Electra.* Take not the oath of gods,  
 Who art but half a man, blaspheming coward !

*Ægisthus.* But you, by Heaven, if this be a sword,

Shall not be any more—

*Electra.* —A slave to thee,

Blundering bloodshedder, though thou boast thyself  
As huge as Ossa piled on Pelion,  
Or anything but that weak wretch thou art !  
Oh, thou hast only half done thy black work !  
Thou should'st have slain the young lion with the old.  
Look that he come not back, and find himself  
Ungiven food, and still the lion's share !

*Aegisthus.* Insolent ! but I know to seal thy lips—

*Electra.* —For thou art only strong among the  
weak.

We know thou hast an aptitude for blood.  
To take a woman's is an easy task,  
And one well worthy thee.

*Aegisthus.* Oh, but for words !

*Electra.* Yet, could'st thou feed on all the noble  
blood

Of god-like generations on this earth,  
It should not help thee to a hero's heart.

*Chorus.* O peace, Electra, but for pity's sake !  
Heap not his madness to such dangerous heights.

*Electra.* I will speak out my heart's scorn, though  
I die.

*Aegisthus.* And thou shalt die, but not till I have  
tamed

That stubborn spirit to a wish for life.

*Chorus.* O cease, infatuate ! I hear the Queen.

[By a movement of the Eccylema the palace is thrown  
open, and discoveres CLYTEMNESTRA standing over  
the body of AGAMEMNON.

**XIX. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS. ÆGISTHUS.  
ELECTRA.**

*Clytemnestra.* Argives ! behold the man who was  
your King !

*Chorus.* Dead ! dead !

*Clytemnestra.* Not I, but Fate hath dealt  
this blow.

*Chorus.* Dead ! dead, alas ! look where he lies, O  
friends !

That noble head, and to be brought so low !

*Clytemnestra.* He who set light by woman, with  
blind scorn,

And held her with the beasts we sacrifice,  
Lies, by a woman sacrificed himself.

This is high justice which appeals to you.

*Chorus.* Alas ! alas ! I know not words for this !

*Clytemnestra.* We are but as the instrument of  
heaven.

Our work is not design, but destiny.

A God directs the lightning to its fall ;  
It smites and slays, and passes other-where,  
Pure in its self, as when, in light, it left  
The bosom of Olympus, to its end.

In this cold heart the wrong of all the past  
Lies buried. I avenged, and I forgive.

Honour him yet. He is a king, though fallen.

*Chorus.* Oh, how she sets Virtue's own crest on  
Crime,

And stands there stern as Fate's wild arbitress !  
Not any deed could make her less than great.

(CLYTEMNESTRA descends the steps, and lays her hand  
on the arm of ÆGISTHUS.)

*Clytemnestra.* Put up thy sword ! Enough of blood is spilt.

*Ægisthus.* Hist ! Oh, not half—Orestes is escaped.

*Clytemnestra.* Sufficient for the future be that thought.

What's done is well done. What's undone—yet more : Some thing still saved from crime.

*Ægisthus.* This lion's whelp Will work some mischief yet.

*Clytemnestra.* He is a child—  
—Our own—we will but war upon the strong,  
Not upon infants. Let this matter rest.

*Ægisthus.* Oh, ever, in the wake of thy great will  
Let me steer sure ! and we will leave behind  
Great tracks of light upon the wondering world.  
If but you err not here—

*Clytemnestra.* These pale-eyed groups !  
See how they huddle shuddering, and stand round ;  
As when some mighty beast, the brindled lord  
Of the rough woodside, sends his wild death-roar  
Up the shrill caves, the meaner denizens  
Of ancient woods, shy deer, and timorous hares,  
Peer from the hairy thickets, and shrink back.  
We fear'd the lion, and we smote him down.  
Now fear is over. Shall we turn aside  
To harry jackalls ? Laugh ! we have not laugh'd  
So long, I think you have forgotten how !  
Have we no right to laugh like other men ?  
Ha ! ha ! I laugh. Now it is time to laugh !

*Chorus.* Oawful sight ! Look where the bloody sun,  
As though with Agamemnon he were slain,  
Runs reeking, lurid, down the palace floors !

*Clytemnestra.* O my beloved! Now will we reign  
                sublime,  
And set our foot upon the neck of Fortune!  
And, for the rest—oh, much remains!—For you  
                (*To the Chorus*)

A milder sway, if mildly you submit  
To our free service and supremacy.  
Nor tax, nor toll, to carry dim results  
Of distant war beyond the perilous seas.  
But gateless justice in our halls of state,  
And peace in all the borders of our land!  
For you—

(*To ELECTRA, who has thrown herself upon the body of AGAMEMNON*).

*Electra.* Oh, hush! What more remains to me,  
But this dead hand, whose clasp is cold in mine?  
And all the basiled memory of the past,  
Buried with him? What more?

*Clytemnestra.* —A mother's heart,  
If you will come to it. Free confidence.  
A liberal share in all our future hope.  
Now, more than ever—mutually weak—  
We stand in need, each of the other's love.  
Our love! it shall not sacrifice thee, child,  
To wanton whims of war, as he, of old,  
Did thy dead sister. If you will not these,  
But answer love with scorn, why then—

*Electra.* —What then?

*Clytemnestra.* Safe silence. And permission to  
forget.

**XX. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS. CLYTEMNESTRA.  
CASSANDRA. ÆGISTHUS.**

*Chorus.* What shall we say ? What has been done ?

Shed no tear ! Oh, shed no tear !  
Hang up his harness in the sun ;  
The hookèd car, and barbèd spear ;  
And all war's adamantine gear  
Of trophied spoils ; for all his toils  
Are over, alas ! are over, and done !  
What shall we say ? what has been done ?  
Shed no tear ! Oh, shed no tear !  
But keep solemn silence all,  
As befits when heroes fall ;  
Solemn as his fame is ; sad  
As his end was ; earth shall wear  
Mourning for him. See, the sun  
Blushes red for what is done !  
And the wild stars, one by one,  
Peer out of the lurid air,  
And shrink back with awe, and fear,  
Shuddering, for what is done.  
When the night comes, dark and dun,  
As our sorrow ; blackness far  
Shutting out the crimson sun ;  
Turn his face to the moon, and star,—  
These are bright as his glories are—  
And great Heaven shall see its son !  
What shall we say ? what has been done ?  
Shed no tear ! oh, shed no tear !

Gather round him, friends ! Look here !  
 All the wreaths which he hath won  
 In the race that he hath run—  
 Laurel garlands, every one !  
 These are things to think upon,  
 Mourning till the set of sun—  
 Till the mourning moon appear.  
 Now the wreaths which Fame begun  
 To uplift, to crown his head,  
 Memory shall seize upon,  
 And make chaplets for his bier.  
 He shall have wreaths though he be dead !  
 But his monument is here,  
 Built up in our hearts, and dear  
 To all honour. Shed no tear !  
 Oh, let not any tear be shed !

*Semi-chorus.* Look at Cassandra ! she is stooping down.

*Semi-chorus.* She dips and moves her fingers in the blood !

*Semi-chorus.* Look to her ! There's a wildness in her eye !

*Semi-chorus.* What does she ?

*Semi-chorus.* Oh, in Agamemnon's blood  
She hath writ *Orestes* on the palace steps !

*Clytemnestra.* Ægisthus !

*Ægisthus.* Queen and bride !

*Clytemnestra.* We have not fail'd.

*Chorus.* Come, venerable, ancient Night !

From sources of the western stars,  
In darkest shade that fits this woe.  
Consoler of a thousand griefs,

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And likest death unalterably calm.  
We toil, aspire, and sorrow,  
And in a little while shall cease.  
For we know not whence we came,  
And who can ensure the morrow ?  
Thou, eternally the same,  
From of old, in endless peace  
Eternally survivest ;  
Enduring on through good and ill,  
Coëval with the Gods ; and still  
In thine own silence livest.  
Our days thou leadest home  
To the great Whither which has no Again !  
Impartially to pleasure and to pain  
Thou sett'st the bourne. To thee shall all things come.

*Clytemnestra.* But, if he cease to love me, what is  
gain'd ?

*Cassandra.* With wings darkly spreading,  
Like ravens to the carcass  
Scenting far off the savour of blood,  
From shores of the unutterable River,  
They gather and swoop,  
• They waver, they darken.  
From the fangs that raven,  
From the eyes that glare  
Intolerably fierce,  
Save me, Apollo !  
Ai ! Ai ! Ai !  
Ailinon ! Ailinon !  
Blood, blood ! and of kindred nature,  
Which the young wolf returning  
Shall dip his fangs in,

Thereby accursedly  
Imbibing madness !

*Chorus.* The wild woman is uttering strange things  
Foulful to listen to.

*Clytemnestra.* Within the House  
Straightway confine her,  
There to learn wisdom.

*Ægisthus.* Orestes—oh, this child's life now out-  
weighs

That mighty ruin, Agamemnon dead !

*Clytemnestra.* *Ægisthus,* dost thou love me ?

*Ægisthus.* Ay.

*Clytemnestra.* Our lives,  
Henceforth, are one, for evermore.

*Ægisthus.* I know it.

*Clytemnestra.* I am all thine—

*Ægisthus.* I know it.

*Clytemnestra.* Thou all mine—

*Ægisthus.* Ay. Art thou happy ?

*Clytemnestra.* If thou lovest me, yes.

Say thou dost love me still.

*Ægisthus.* I love thee still.

*Clytemnestra.* That's coldly answer'd, that was  
hotly ask'd.

Yet love me still, dear love, I love thee more.

*Ægisthus.* That life was in him, should, I think,  
have made

His days outnumber ours.

*Clytemnestra.* Think not on this.

*Ægisthus.* Ay. It is nothing now.

*Clytemnestra.* Which leaves us much.

Life's much, and love is more.

*Ægisthus.* For we must die.  
 We too. All passes, and must pass away.  
 There's nothing certain in man's life but this  
 That he must lose it. Every hour's a thief,  
 And all the world's unstable. Who's assured  
 The sun will rise to-morrow? Each man stands  
 Poised on this little pinnacle of time  
 The ever-crumbing moment, eminent  
 In midst of such innumerable mischance  
 That nothing is, or is conceivable,  
 Of strength or size so insignificant  
 But what it may upset him! None is safe,  
 Sleeping or waking. And between us all  
 And what shall be the end of us at last  
 There's nothing but our ignorance of it.

*Clytemnestra.* Be thankful therefore for what is :  
 nor make

What is not worse than though it were indeed,  
 By fearing it, *Ægisthus*.

*Ægisthus.* Yet although  
 We lay our lives within each other's arms  
 Sleeping, there is no certainty in this :  
 For he that's slain so trusted both of us  
 As we must trust each other, we that slew him.

*Clytemnestra.* Then, as I trust thee, trust me also.

*Ægisthus.* Ay.

*Clytemnestra.* Come. Open Hymen's honour'd  
 hand shall bear

Conspicuous now our spousal torch. For he  
 That stood between us being no more to fear,  
 Our love is free, beloved *Ægisthus*.

*Ægisthus.* Free!

*Chorus.* Only Heaven is high. •  
Only the Gods are great.  
Above the searchless sky,  
In unremovèd state ;  
They from their golden mansions,  
Look over the lands, and the seas ;  
The ocean's wide expansions,  
And the earth's varieties :  
Secure of their supremacy,  
And sure of affluent ease.  
Who shall say " I stand !" nor fall ?  
Destiny is over all !  
Rust will crumble old renown.  
Bust and column tumble down ;  
Keep, and castle ; tower, and town ;  
Throne, and sceptre ; crest, and crown.  
Destiny is over all !  
One by one, the pale guests fall  
At lighted feast, in palace hall ;  
And feast is turn'd to funeral.  
Who shall say " I stand !" nor fall ?  
Destiny is over all !

# **LYRICAL.**

**PART I.**



## LINES.

BECAUSE she hath the sweetest eyes,  
The bluest, truest,—and more wise  
Than woodland violets wild in wood  
To make wholesome the earth, and good ;  
Because she hath such glad gold hair  
That nothing in the laughing air  
Of the lusty May, at morn,  
When all that's bright and glad is born,  
Ever was so glad and bright ;  
And, therewith, a hand more white  
And warm than is the warm'd coat  
Of whiteness round a meek dove's throat.  
Yet withal so calm, so pure,  
No ill passion may endure  
That screnest hand's chaste touch :  
And because my love is such  
That I do not dare to speak  
Of the changes on her cheek,  
Which the sunrise and sunset

Of her luminous thoughts beget,  
Nor of her rose-sweet mouth, that is  
Too sweet to kiss, or not to kiss,  
'Tis aye so sweet and savorous ;  
And because (to comfort us  
For what throbings of sweet pain  
Come, and go, and come again,  
Till the wishful sense be full,  
Gazing on aught so beautiful)  
Such innocent wise ways she knoweth.  
And so good is all she doeth,—  
All she is,—so simple, fair,  
Joyous, just, and debonair,  
That there is none so ignorant  
Of worship, nor with soul so scant  
Of visitations from above,  
But, seeing her, he needs must love,  
And purely love, her,—and for this,  
Love better everything that is ;—

Therefore now, my Songs, will I  
That ye into her presence hie,  
Flying over land and sea,  
Many an one, that sever me  
From the sweet thing that hath the sleeping  
Joy of my shut heart in keeping.  
But, that when ye hence be gone  
Into the bounteous region  
Of that bright land over sea  
Wherein so many sweet things be,  
Where my Lady aye doth dwell,

Ye her dwelling dear may tell,  
Nor its special sweetness miss  
In midst of many sweetesses ;  
Yet awhile, my Songs, delay  
Till I have told ye, as I may,  
All the fairness of the place  
That is familiar with the grace  
And glory of my Lady's face.

And (so shall ye know that she  
*Dwelleteth in loftier light than we,*  
As intimate with skyey things  
As are creatures that have wings)  
Being come to mountains seven,  
Note that one that's nighest heaven :  
Thereon lieth against the sun  
A place of pleasaunce, all o'er-run  
With whisperous shade, and blossoming  
Of divers trees, wherein do sing  
The little birds, and all together,  
All day long in happy weather.  
And well I ween that since the birth  
Of Adam's firstborn, not on earth  
Hath ever been such sweet singing  
Of bird on bough, as here doth bring  
Into a large and leafy ease  
His sense that strayeth among the trees,  
Where mingled is full many a note  
Of golden-finck and speckle-throat.  
Even the hoarse-chested starling  
Here, where creepeth never a snarling  
Gust to vex his heart, all day

LYRICAL.

Learneth a more melodious lay .  
Than that whereby this bird is known,  
Which, otherwhere, with chiding tone,  
What time the fretful Spring doth heave  
The frozen North, to winds, that grieve  
Round about the grave of March,  
He chaunteth from the cloudy larch :  
The linnet loud, and throstle eke,  
And the blackbird of golden beak,  
With perpetual madrigals  
Do melodize the warm green walls  
Of those blossom-crownèd groves,  
In whose cool hearts the cooing doves  
Make murmurings innumerable,  
Of sound as sweet as when a well  
With noise of bubbled water leapeth  
At a green couch where Silence sleepeth :  
Nor less, the long-voiced nightingale  
Doth, deep down in bloomy vale  
Delicious, pour at full moonlight  
The song he hath rehearsed o'er-night ;  
And many other birds be there  
Of most sweet voice, and plumage rare,  
And names that I not know. Of trees  
That spring therein such plenty is  
That I to tell them over all  
Encumber'd am. Both maple tall  
There sheweth his silver-mottled bark ;  
And beeches, colour'd like the dark  
Red wine o' the South ; and laurels green,  
Sunny and smooth, that make rich screen  
Round mossy places, where all day

Red squirrels and gray conies play,  
Munching brown nuts and such wild fare  
As tumbleth from the branches there.  
And, for moisture of sweet showers,  
All the grass is thick with flowers ;  
Primrose pure, that cometh alone ;  
Daisies quaint, with savour none,  
But golden eyes of great delight  
That all men love, they be so bright ;  
And, cold in grassy cloister set,  
Many a maiden violet ;  
The bramble flower, the scarlet hepe,  
Hangeth above in sunny sleep,  
And all around be knots and rows  
Of tufted thyme, and lips of cows ;  
Whose sweet savour goeth about  
The jocund bowers, in and out,  
And dieth over all the place ;  
So that there is not any space  
Of sun or shade, but haunted is  
With ghosts of many sweetnesses.  
There, dreading no intrusive stroke  
Of lifted axe, the lusty oak  
Broad his branches brown doth fling,  
And reigneth, " every inch a king :"  
Him also of that other kind  
In great plenty shall ye find,  
That while the great year goeth around  
Sheddeth never his leaves to ground,  
But in himself his summer hath,  
And oweth not, nor borroweth,  
As (though but rare) there be some wise

## LYRICAL.

Good men, that to themselves suffice ;  
But in northern land we see  
Full few, and they but stunted be,  
Of this goodly kind of tree.  
The ever-trembling birch, through all  
Her hoary lights ethereal,  
Doth twinkle there, twixt green and gray ;  
And of fruit-trees is great array :  
The apple and the pear tree both,  
Smother'd o'er in creamy froth  
Of bubbled blossoms ; the green fig,  
With leathern leaves, and horny twig,  
And gluey globes ; the juniper,  
That smelleth sweet in midsummer ;  
Nor peach-tree, there, nor apricot,  
Needeth either nail or knot ;  
Nor there from churlish weathers wince  
The orange, lemon, plum, and quince ;  
But under these, by grassy slopes,  
Hangeth the vine her leafy ropes ;  
Wild Proteus she, o' the wanton wood,  
That ever shifteth her merry mood,  
And, aye in luxury of change,  
Loveth to revel, and dance, and range,  
In leaves, not hers, she fleeteth through,  
Hiding her large grape-bunches blue ;  
And here, o'er haunts he maketh brown  
With droppings from his scented crown,  
Standeth the stately sycamore  
Lifting airy terrace o'er  
Airy terrace ;—such of yore  
Dusky masons, deftly skill'd

Mighty stones to pile and build,  
Up-hung in sumptuous Babylon,  
For silken kings at set of sun  
To dally with dark girls ; but these  
Are humm'd about by honey bees,  
And cicale all day long  
Creek the chamber'd shades among.  
Far away, down hills that seem  
Liquid (for the light doth stream  
Through and through them) like that vail  
Of lucid mist Morn spreadeth pale  
O'er Summer's sallow forehead, found  
Somewhere asleep on upland ground  
Under the shade of heavy woods,  
Imaginary multitudes  
Of melancholy olives waste  
Their wanness, smiling half effaced  
In a smooth sea of slumbrous glory ;  
But high on inland promontory  
Blandly the broad-headed pine,  
Basking in the blue divine,  
Drowseth, drench'd with sunny sky :  
And, while the blue needle-fly  
Nimbly pricketh in and out  
The leaf-broider'd lawns about  
(As busy she as highborn dame  
In shining silk, at tambour frame),  
The pomegranate, flowering flame,  
Burneth lone in cool retreats,  
Hidden from those gorgeous heats  
Where summer smouldereth into sweets.  
Now, when ye have this goodly wood

All roamed through, in gamesome mood,  
At morning tide, and thereon spent  
Large wealth of love and wonderment,  
In honour due of such full cheer  
And lustihood as laugheth here  
The well-bower'd grass about,  
That windeth in, and windeth out,  
Under those bright ribandings  
The red-budded bramble flings  
From branch to branch, still straying on  
Softly, ye shall be ware anon  
Of a fair garden, glad and great,  
Where my Lady, in high state  
Of beauty, doth twixt eve and noon,  
Under a spiritual moon,  
Visit full oft her vassal flowers  
In silent and sweet-scented hours,  
When quiet vast is everywhere,  
About the blue benignant air  
And the cool grass, a deep immense  
Gladness, an undisturbed sense  
Of goodness in the gather'd calm  
Of old green woodlands bathed in balm,  
And bounteous silence. . . . O my love,  
How softly do the sweet hours move  
About thy peaceful perfectness !  
O hasten, little Songs ! O press  
To meet my Lady, ye that be  
Her children, if she knew ! . . . But she  
Still lingereth, and the silver dawn  
Is silent on the unfooted lawn.  
Here all day doth couch and sport

Trim Flora, with her florid court :  
Roses that be illuminèd  
With royal colour rich and red ;  
Some, with bosoms open wide,  
Where the brown bee, undenied,  
Drinketh deep of honey drops ;  
Others, whose enamell'd knops  
Prettily do peep between  
Their half-bursten cradles green ;  
Lordly lilies, pale and proud ;  
And of all flowers a great crowd ;  
Whose rare-colour'd kirtles show  
More hues than of the rainy bow.  
In sweet warmth and lucid air  
Nod they all and whisper, where  
Lightly along each leafy lane  
Zephyrus, with his tripping train,  
Cometh at cool of even hour  
To greet in all her pomp and power  
Queen Flora, when in mansions damp  
Of the dim moss his spousal lamp  
Aloof the enamour'd glow-worm doth  
Softly kindle ; while the moth  
Flitteth ; and, at elfin rites,  
Sprucely dance the little Sprites  
Under the young moon all alone,  
Round about King Oberon.  
But ye this pleasaunce fair shall reach  
Ere yet from off the slanted peach  
The drops of silver dew be slipp'd,  
Or night-born buds be open-lipp'd.  
There shall ye find, in lustrous shade

Of laurels cool, an old well-head .  
That whelmeth up from under-ground,  
And falleth with a tinkling sound  
In a broad basin, basèd there,  
All rose-porphyry, smooth and fair.  
The water is ever fresh and new,  
As that Narcissus gazed into,  
When, for love of his sweet self,  
He fainted from the flowery shelf,  
Leaving Echo all that pain ;  
So that now there doth remain  
Of him that was so fair and sweet  
Only in some green retreat  
A purple flower seldom found,  
And of her a hollow sound  
In hollow places. There shall ye  
Pause as ye pass, and sing . . “ To thee,  
Water, our Master bade us say  
Glad be thy heart, and pure alway ;  
May thy full urn never fail,  
Thee nor sun nor frost assail,  
Nor wild winter’s wind molest thee,  
Never newt nor eft infest thee,  
Taint nor trouble touch thee never,  
Heaven above thee smile for ever,  
Earth around thee ever bear  
Beauteous buds and blossoms rare ;  
Far from thee be all foul things,  
Slaves to thee be all sweet springs,  
Because thou, of thy kindness, hast  
Shown, in blissful summers past,  
To fondest eyes have ever been,

Sweetest face was ever seen :  
Therefore be blest for evermore."  
But if, my Songs, ye would explore  
This pleasaunce all, there be therein  
Delights so many, day would win  
His under-goal ere ye were forth  
Of your much musing on the worth  
That is therein, and wondrous grace :  
Therefore, ere the sun down-pace,  
Must ye onward, where is spread  
A fair terrace ; and overhead  
Thick trellis of the trembling vine,  
That with leaves doth loop and twine  
Airy casements, whence the glance  
Of whoso there, as in a trance,  
Walketh about the whisperous shade  
Under that vaulted verdure laid,  
Seëth far down, and far away,  
Tower'd cities, throng'd and gay,  
Blowing woodlands, bright blue streams  
Sparkling outward, yellow gleams  
Of wavèd corn, and sun-burnt swells  
Of pasture, soothed with sounds of bells  
Sprinkled in air, of various tone,  
From little hill-side chapels lone,  
And peaceful flocks that stray and pass  
Down endless lengths of lowland grass.  
And, certes, I will boldly say  
Of this fair place, let mock who may,  
That of joy the quintessence  
Hath never slept about the sense  
Of mortal man that is to die

With fullness sweet as that which I  
Deep in my swoonèd heart have known,  
Whilom walking, not alone,  
Here in summer morns and eves  
When shadowy showers of flittering leaves  
Fall, shaken thick from many a rout  
Of little birds that fast flew out  
Above us; interruption sweet  
To converse, felt the more complete  
For the interposèd pauses  
Born of all such innocent causes.

High on the happy lawn above  
Standeth the dwelling of my love.  
Fair white all the mansion seemeth,  
Save where in green shadow dreameth  
The broad blossom-buttress'd roof,  
Or where the many-colour'd woof  
Of honeysuckle and creeping flowers,  
Visibly from vernal showers  
Winning length, hath broider'd all  
With braided buds the southern wall.  
Therein many windows be;  
And every window fair to see,  
O'er-canopied with hangings bright,  
For shelter fresh from summer light.  
And underneath, in urns and pots,  
Sweet-smelling basil, and red knots  
Of roses ripe; for every casement  
Is balconied about at basement,  
A space where three or four may sit  
At interchange of song or wit,

In the low amber evening hours,  
Overlooking lawns and flowers.

In the hall, which is beneath,  
A fountain springeth and echoeth,  
Blown by a sad-looking Nymph,  
Ravish't from her native lymph  
And mossy grot, in days of old ;  
And in marble mute and cold  
Here for ever must she dwell  
Uncompanion'd, by the spell  
Of a stern old sculptor caught ;  
For, aye since then, the hand that wrought  
This stony charm her limbs upon  
May not undo it. Years are gone,  
And still about her doth she stare,  
Amazed however she came there.

But ye, since ye be free to reve  
This mansion through, to floors above  
Up the majestic marble stair  
Pass with still steps, unseen, to where  
Soon shall ye find, in sequel long,  
Twelve great chambers : some be hung  
With arras quaint, that doth portray  
Hounds that hold the hart at bay  
In good green wood, and hunters bold,  
And dames aclad in green and gold ;  
And evermore their horns be wound,  
And evermore there cometh no sound :  
Others in glowing fresco tell  
Great Caesar's tale, and how he fell

Pierced through and through ; with many a story  
Of ancient kings that be in glory,  
And high-renownèd heroes old ;  
Sir Tristram, with his harp of gold,  
That rashly drain'd the philtre brew'd  
By the witch Queen for fair Isoud ;  
Roland in Roncevallès slain ;  
And bold Sir Ogier the Dane ;  
Huon of Bordeaux, love's true star ;  
Saladin with his scimitar ;  
The Red-beard Kaiser, sleeping still  
Hid in the heart of Salzburg Hill ;  
David that danceth round the ark ;  
And Charlemagne ; ye there may mark.

But, O my Songs, more softly now,  
More softly move ! Breathe low, breathe low !  
For, by my heart's most tender fear,  
I know that ye must now be near  
The place where, nesting meek and warm,  
Rosy cheek on snowy arm,  
With loos'd hair and lidded eye  
Dreaming doth my Lady lie :  
And all around the restful air  
Is silent, sweet, and pure, as where  
Fond hands some holy taper trim,  
Peaceful in sacred precincts dim.  
Now, that my spirit, though far away  
From her loved beauty, night and day  
Ever in unreleasèd pine  
Seeking, on many a musèd line,  
To flow toward her, purely may

Her pureness praise,—humbly I pray  
Of all good things that wait upon  
The mind that maketh devotion  
To what is fair (since such do lean  
O'er mortal spirits oft unseen  
Out of the deep and starry night,  
Or steal on beams of morning light,  
Or breath of buds, or sound of song  
Remember'd, to keep safe from wrong,  
And wretchedness, and self-mistrust,  
Whatever warreth in this dust  
Against oblivion), that their grace  
May from my spirit purge and chase  
All that is in it not sweet and pure ;  
So may I look with insight sure  
Into myself, and favour find  
To make a mirror within my mind,  
Whereon, unsoil'd of any taint  
Of sinful thought, my most sweet saint  
Her fairness may from far let fall  
In a deep peace perpetual.

The memory of her is mellow light  
In darkness, mingling something bright  
With all things ; like a summer night.

The presence of her is young sunrise,  
That gladdeneth, and, in wondrous wise,  
Glorifieth, the earth and skies :

Her spirit is tender and bright as dew  
Of May-morn fresh, when stars be few :  
Her heart is harmless, simple, and true,

And blithe, and sweet, as bird in bower,  
That singeth alone from hour to hour :  
Her face is fair as April flower :

Her voice is fresh as bubbling bound  
Of silver stream, in land new found,  
That maketh ever a pleasant sound

To the soul of a thirsty traveller :  
Her laugh is light as grasshopper :  
Her breath is sweet as midsummer :

Her hair is a marvellous living thing  
With a will of its own : the little locks fling  
Showers of brown gold, gambolling,

Over the ever-fleeting shade  
About her shoulder and sweet throat stray'd,  
With delicate odours underlaid :

Like calm midsummer cloud, nor less  
Clothed with sweet light and silentness,  
She in her gracious movement is :

Noble withal, and free from fear  
As heart of eagle, and high, and near  
To heaven in all her ways : of cheer

Gentle, and meek, from harshness free  
As heart of dove : nor chideth she  
Things ill, but knoweth not that they be :

All clear as waters clean that run  
Through shadow sweet, and through sweet sun,  
Her pure thoughts are : scorn hath she none :

But in my Lady's perfect nature  
All is sincere, and of sweet feature.  
This earth hath none such other creature.

Rise, little Songs, on nimble wing !  
Arise ! arise ! as larks do sing  
Lost in that heaven of light they love,  
So rise, so lose yourselves above  
My darkness, in the perfect light  
Of her that is so pure and bright !  
Rise, little Songs ! with lusty cheer  
Rise up to greet my Lady dear.  
Be bold, and say to her with pride,—  
“ We are the souls of loves that died ;  
Whose sweetness is hope sorrow-fed,  
Whose tendernesses tears unshed ;  
And we are essences that rise  
From passions burn'd in sacrifice ;  
The youngest and bright-ey'd heirs  
Of blind unbeautiful despairs ;  
Voiced resignations, once dumb wrongs.”  
Then, if she smile on you, my Songs,  
Say, as I bid you, word for word,  
“ Lady of him that is our lord,  
We from his heart, where we were born,  
Shelter'd, and shut from shame and scorn,  
Now at his bidding (well-a-day  
For him, and us !) being fled away,  
Never again may there abide,  
Never return, and, undenied,  
Creep in, and fold our wings. and rest  
At peace in our abandon'd nest.

Wherefore, dear mistress, prithée take  
 (By true love sent, for true love's sake)  
 To thy sweet heart, and spirit pure,  
 Us, that must else but ill endure  
 The scorns of time, and haply fare  
 Homeless as birds in winter are."

But if that, on your way to greet  
 My gracious Lady, ye should meet  
 Haply elsewhere with other folk  
 Who may ask ye in scorn or joke,—  
 "Pray you now, little Songs, declare,  
 Who is that lady so sweet and fair,  
 Whereof this singer that sent ye sings,  
 As certainly sweeter than all sweet things?"  
 See that she answer not, Songs, but deep  
 In your secretest hearts my secret keep;  
 Lest the world, that loveth me not, should tell  
 The name of the Lady I love so well.

### LOVE-FANCIES.

SEE, with moonfern I have crown'd me!  
 Arab spells shall now defend me.  
 Weave a wizard circle round me,  
 And burn amber,—lest Love rend me!  
     O rapture, O fear, love!  
     O stoop not too near, Love,  
 Lest I die of thy touch, I who conjured thee here, love!

Since we parted yester eve,  
 I do love thee, love, believe,  
 Twelve times dearer, twelve hours longer,  
 One dream deeper, one night stronger,  
 One sun surer,—thus much more  
 Than I loved thee, love, before.

Is it you . . . . or a garden of flowers,  
 Blooming, blooming, breathing, breathing,  
 Budding, budding; whence sweet Hours  
 Their delighted brows are wreathing ?  
 Is it I . . . . or a nest of song-birds,  
 Chirping, chirping all together ?  
 To the old birds pipe the young birds,  
 ' Fly, fly ! it is summer weather !'

If your foot's tip out you slide  
 Your husht robe's light white rims under,  
 Sweeps a long, strong, scented tide,  
 Wishful wave on wave, of wonder  
 To me, through me, o'er me, down me,  
 In delicious depths to drown me.  
 When your foot's tip back you slide  
 (Some divine Unknown regaining  
 Its stray'd treasure) then that tide,  
 With its strong wave's reflux straining,  
 Sucks and sweeps my soul from me  
 Out into a measureless sea.

Is it self-love to love thee so,  
 Thou being my all I am, my me,  
 My very self indeed ? ah no,  
 Since all I am belongs to thee !

What is but many is but few :  
 A million halves do vainly clutch  
 At unity by multiplied half-action :  
 Mere one and one is merely two :  
 And merely two is one too much :  
 But you are I, and I am you,  
 And we two one, whose sum is such  
 That all the world else, with its loud ado,  
 Is nothing more than a superfluous fraction.

Love is Nature's eye-sight ! yes,  
 Nature is a giantess,  
 In whose forehead is one eye ;  
 That is Man ; and she thereby  
 Seeth God, and thereby only.  
 Wherefore, lest God leave her lonely,  
 She, that through the ages sleepeth  
 Never, ever open keepeth  
 That great eye upturn'd on God.  
 Yet were Nature but a clod,  
 Since her eye would then be blind,  
 Did not love illume mankind.

O leave me, love, that narrow hand  
 Curl'd flowerlike in my folded palm,

Till all my soul doth understand,  
 That Love's most perfect crown is Calm !  
 I think that, by and by, all things  
 Which were perplext a while ago,  
 And life's long vain conjecturings  
 Will simple, clear, and quiet grow.  
 Already, round about me, some  
 August and solemn sunset seems  
 Deep-sleeping in a dewy dome  
 Of twilight, o'er a land of dreams,  
 Sombre, and soft, and infinite :  
 The hush of old warm woods, that lie  
 Low in the lap of Evening, bright,  
 And bathed in vast tranquillity !

God's in matter everywhere :  
 Flower, bird, beast, and man and woman,  
 Earth, and water, fire, and air :  
 All divine is all that's human.  
 Only, matter's dense opaqueness  
 Checks God's light from shining through it,  
 And our senses (such their weakness !)  
 Cannot help our souls to view it,  
 Till Love lends the world translucence ;  
 Then we see God clear in all things.  
 Love's the new sense, Love's the true sense,  
 Whereby souls learn how to call things !

## EVENING.

ALREADY evening ! In the duskiest nook  
Of yon dusk corner, under the Death's-head,  
Between the alembecs, thrust this legended,  
And iron-bound, and melancholy book,  
For I will read no longer. The loud brook  
Shelves his sharp light up shallow banks thin-  
spread ;  
The slumbrous west grows slowly red, and red :  
Up from the ripen'd corn her silver hook  
The moon is lifting : and deliciously  
Along the warm blue hills the day declines :  
The first star brightens while she waits for me,  
And round her swelling heart the zone grows tight :  
Musing, half-sad, in her soft hair she twines  
The white rose, whispering "He will come to-  
night!"

## AT HER CASEMENT.

I AM knee-deep in grass, 'neath this warm June-night,  
In the shade here, shut off from the great moonlight.  
All alone, at her casement there,  
She sits in the light, and she combs her hair.

She shakes it over the carven seat,  
And combs it down to her stately feet.  
And I watch her, hid in the blue June-night,  
Till my soul grows faint with the costly sight.

There's no flaw on that fair fine brow of hers,  
As fair and as proud as Lucifer's.  
She looks in the glass as she turns her head :  
She knows that the rose on her cheek is red :  
She knows how her deep eyes shine—their light  
Would scarcely be dimm'd though I died to-night.

I would that there in her chamber I stood,  
Full-face to her terrible beauty : I would  
I were laid on her queenly breast, at her lips,  
With her warm hair wound through my finger-tips,  
Draining her soul at one deep-drawn kiss.  
And I would be humbly content, for this,  
To die, as is due, before the morn,  
Kill'd by her slowly-returning scorn.

## ONE NIGHT.

### L.

A FALLING star that shot across  
The intricate and twinkling dark  
Vanish'd, yet left no sense of loss  
Throughout the wide ethereal arc

## II.

Of those serene and solemn skies  
 That round the dusky prospect rose,  
 And ever seem'd to rise, and rise,  
 Through regions of unreach'd repose.

## III.

Far, on the windless mountain-range,  
 One crimson sparklet died : the blue  
 Flush'd with a brilliance, faint and strange,  
 The ghost of daylight, dying too.

## IV.

But half-reveal'd, each terrace urn  
 Glimmer'd, where now, in filmy flight,  
 We watch'd return, and still return,  
 The blind bats searching air for sight.

## V.

With sullen fits of fleeting sound,  
 Borne half asleep on slumbrous air,  
 The drowsy beetle humm'd around,  
 And pass'd, and oft repass'd us, there ;

## VI.

Where, hand in hand, our looks alight  
 With thoughts our faint lips left untold,  
 We sat, in that delicious night,  
 On that dim terrace, green and old.

## VII.

Deep down, far off, the city lay,  
 When forth from all its spires was swept  
 A music o'er our souls ; and they  
 To music's midmost meanings leapt ;

## VIII.

And, crushing some delirious cry  
 Against each other's lips, we clung  
 Together silent, while the sky  
 Throbbing with sound around us hung:

## IX.

For, borne from bells on music soft,  
 That solemn hour went forth through heaven,  
 To stir the starry airs aloft,  
 And thrill the purple pulse of even.

## X.

O happy hush of heart to heart !  
 O moment molten through with bliss !  
 O Love, delaying long to part  
 That first, fast, individual kiss !

## XI.

Was it some drowsy rose that moved ?  
 Some dreaming dove's pathetic moan ?  
 Or was it my name from lips beloved ?  
 And was it thy sweet breath, my Own,

## XII.

That made me feel the tides of sense  
 O'er life's low levels rise with might  
 And pour my being down the immense  
 Shore of some sudden Infinite ?

## XIII.

" Oh, have I found thee, my soul's soul ?  
 My chosen forth from time and space !  
 And did we then break earth's control ?  
 And have I seen thee face to face ?

## XIV.

“ Close, closer to this bursting breast,  
   Closer thy long'd-for arms enfold !  
 I need such warmth, for else the rest  
   Of life will freeze me dead with cold.

## XV.

“ Long was the search, the effort long,  
   Ere I compell'd thee from thy sphere,  
 I know not by what mystic song,  
   I know not with what nightly tear :

## XVI.

“ But thou art here, beneath whose eyes  
   My passion falters, even as some  
 Pale wizard's taper sinks, and dies,  
   When to his spell a spirit is come.

## XVII.

“ What hath life been ? What will it be ?  
   How have I lived without thee ? How  
 Is life both lost and found in thee ?  
   Feel'st thou Forever in this Now ?

## XVIII.

“ All in a moment ! a whole world,  
   With all its wonders strange and far,  
 In one fierce point of glory furl'd ;  
   —A universe within a star !

## XIX.

“ Born for one bliss that could not fail,  
   How should faith flinch, or patience tire ?  
 I knew that Time could not prevail  
   Against my soul's intense desire,

## XX.

“ Nor shut these famisht eyes in night,  
 Of thee unsolaced. In which faith  
 Doubtless it must have been most light  
 To bear with life, and laugh at death :

## XXI.

“ But now, life hath so much to lose !  
 And death so much to take ! the heats  
 Of love’s least costly moments use  
 And burn life’s essence out in sweets !

## XXII.

“ Mere antechamber was the past  
 To the crown’d presence of this hour :  
 But, having seen his Queen at last,  
 In all her beauty, all her power,

## XXIII.

“ What merest Page would turn again  
 Content to hum the careless rhyme,  
 Or trifle with the courtier train,  
 That whiled, perchance, a previous time ?

## XXIV.

“ So the old life is lost, I know !  
 The new? ’tis thine, not mine. My Own,  
 If thou should’st leave me lonely now,  
 I must be hopelessly alone.

## XXV.

“ As one idea, half divined,  
 Labours and frets within the brain  
 Of some sad artist, and the mind  
 Is vassal to imperious pain,

## XXVI.

“ For toil by day, for tears by night,  
 Till, in the sphere of vision brought,  
 Rises the beautiful, the bright  
 Predestined, and relentless Thought,

## XXVII.

“ So, clothed in the desire of years,  
 This love doth to its destined seat  
 Rise sovran, through the light of tears,  
 Achieved, accomplisht, and complete !

## XXVIII.

“ Ah, Dearest ! yet the artist's thought  
 Once freed, in form, from forth his soul,  
 By chance and time is seized, and caught  
 Beyond the artist's own control,

## XXIX.

“ To fare, he knows not how, for ill  
 Or well,—be shatter'd, or stand fast.  
 And this freed love, that doth fulfil  
 In thy bright presence my pale past,

## XXX.

“ How shall it fare, for weal or woe ?  
 Already is it pass'd away  
 How far beyond the yes or no  
 That once was in my power to say !

## XXXI.

“ 'Tis mine no longer. It's am I.  
 And it, and I, Sweet-heart, are thine.  
 But thou thyself? . . . dear Destiny,  
 Swear, swear again, that thou art mine !

## •      XXXII.

" Swear twice and thrice, no future hour  
   Shall ever blight what this hath blest !  
 —Nay ! I possess thee by the power  
   Whereby I am myself possest.

## XXXIII.

" And come what may, and pass what must,  
   Why we were born, at last, we know.  
 Spirit to spirit ! . . . Let the dust  
   Do with the dust what dust can do.

## XXXIV.

" Why heed it ? . Our two souls 'tis sure,  
   Now understand the one thing best.  
 This is not earth's : this must endure :  
   Be earth's spite wreak'd upon the rest !

## XXXV.

" These eyes may lose thy looks,—their light :  
   These lips from thine harsh fate may sever :  
 Oh, looks and lips may disunite,  
   But ever love is love for ever !"

## AN EVENING IN TUSCANY.

Look ! the sun sets. Now's the rarest  
   Hour of all the blessed day.  
 (Just the hour, love, you look fairest !)  
   Even the snails are out to play.

Cool the breeze mounts, like this Chianti  
 Which I drain down to the sun.  
 —There ! shut up that old green Dante—  
 Turn the page, where we begun,  
 At the last news of Ulysses—  
 A grand image, fit to close  
 Just such grand gold eves as this is,  
 Full of splendour and repose !  
 So loop up those long bright tresses—  
 Only, one or two must fall  
 Down your warm neck, Evening kisses  
 Through the soft curls spite of all.  
 And look down now, o'er the city  
 Sleeping soft among the hills—  
 Our dear Florence ! That great Pitti  
 With its steady shadow fills  
 Half the town up : its unwinking  
 Cold white windows, as they glare  
 Down the long streets, set one thinking  
 Of the old Dukes who lived there ;  
 For one knows them, those strange men, so—  
 Subtle brains, and iron thews !  
 There, the gardens of Lorenzo—  
 The long cypress avenues—  
 Creep up slow the stately hill side  
 Where the merry loungers are.  
 But far more I love this still side—  
 The blue plain you see so far !  
 Where the shore of bright white villas  
 Leaves off faint : the purple breadths  
 Of the olives and the willows :  
 And the gold-rimm'd mountain-widths :

All transfused in slumbrous glory  
To one burning point—the sun !  
But up here—slow, cold, and hoary  
Reach the olives, one by one :  
And the land looks fresh : the yellow  
Arbute-berries, here and there,  
Growing slowly ripe and mellow  
Through a flush of rosy hair.  
For the Tramontana last week  
Was about : 'Tis scarce three weeks  
Since the snow lay, one white vast streak,  
Upon those old purple peaks.  
So to-day among the grasses  
One may pick up tens and twelves  
Of young olives, as one passes,  
Blown about, and by themselves  
Blackening sullen-ripe. The corn too  
Grows each day from green to golden.  
The large-eyed windflowers forlorn too  
Blow among it, unbehilden :  
Some white, some crimson, others  
Purple blackening to the heart.  
From the deep wheat-sea, which smothers  
Their bright globes up, how they start !  
And the small wild pinks from tender  
Feather-grasses peep at us :  
While above them burns, on slender  
Stems, the red gladiolus :  
Are the grapes yet green ? this season  
They'll be round and sound and true,  
If no after-blight should seize on  
Those young bunches turning blue

O that night of purple weather!  
 (Just before the moon had set)  
 You remember how together  
 We walked home!—the grass was wet—  
 The long grass in the Poderé—  
 With the balmy dew among it:  
 And that Nightingale—his airy  
 Song—how fairy-like he sang it!  
 All the fig-trees had grown heavy  
 With the young figs white and woolly:  
 And the fireflies, bevy on bevy  
 Of soft sparkles, pouring fully  
 Their warm life through trance on trances  
 Of thick citron-shades behind,  
 Rose, like swarms of loving fancies  
 Through some rich and pensive mind.  
 So we reach'd the Logia. Leaning  
 Faint, we sat there in the shade.  
 Neither spoke. The night's deep meaning  
 Fill'd the silence up unsaid.  
 Hoarsely through the Cypress-alley  
 A Civetta out of tune  
 Tried his voice by fits. The valley  
 Lay all dark below the moon.  
 Until into song you burst out—  
 That old song I made for you  
 When we found our rose—the first out  
 Last sweet Spring-time in the dew.  
 Well! . . . if things had gone less wildly—  
 Had I settled down before  
 There, in England—labour'd mildly—  
 And been patient—and learn'd more

Of how men should live in London—  
    Been less happy—or more wise—  
Left no great works tried and undone—  
    Never look'd in your soft eyes—  
I . . . but what's the use of thinking ?  
    Hark ! our Nightingale—he sings—  
Now a rising note—now sinking  
    Back in little broken rings  
Of warm song, that spread and eddy—  
    Now he picks up heart—and draws  
His great music, slow and steady,  
    To a silver-centred pause !

## THE UTMOST.

SOME clerks aver that, as the tree doth fall,  
Even for ever so the tree shall lie,  
And that Death's act doth make perpetual  
The last state of the souls of men that die.  
. If this be so,—if this, indeed, were sure,  
Then not a moment longer would I live ;  
Who, being now as I would fain endure,  
If man's last state doth his last hour survive,  
Should be among the blessed souls. I fear  
Life's many changes, not Death's changelessness.  
So perfect is this moment's passing cheer,  
I needs must tremble lest it pass to less.  
Thus but in fickle love of life I live,  
Lest fickle life me of my love deprive.

## FALSE WITNESSES.

O TRAITOR eyes unkind !  
Rather than ye should play  
The spy and slanderer join'd  
To my poor love, I pray  
Some plague to strike ye blind !  
And you, false ears, that lay  
Foul pitfalls for my mind,  
And wickedly betray  
Your uses, be dead rind  
Henceforth, and senseless clay,  
Rather than ye should find  
Such cruel means to prey  
On Truth and Faith combined.  
Sweet Saint, they wrong thee ! nay,  
I heard not,—or the wind  
Blows nothing true this way,  
I saw not,—or I sinn'd,  
Letting sight slip and stray ;—  
It is these traitors twinn'd,  
That dared to disobey  
The charge to them consign'd,  
These eyes, these ears,—'tis they,  
Not thou that art unkind.  
I heed not what they say.

## THE SUBJECT'S APPEAL.

I.

DEAR despot of thy little state,  
 This busy many-thoughted Me,  
 Which thy sole will doth regulate,  
 Since, 'twixt thy loyal folk and thee,

II.

(Thy loyal folk,—each feeling, thought,  
 And fancy,—all the daily train  
 Which throngs this heart and brain) there's nought  
 That may thy sovran power restrain,

III.

Be in the uses of thy power  
 Gentle, as noble monarchs are ;  
 Nor vary with the varying hour,  
 But, bright and constant as a star,

IV.

• Sit in the system of my soul,  
 And there, unmoved, the motions all  
 Of what thou mak'st my heaven control.  
 Dear, though I be indeed thy thrall,

V.

And such a grace have kings, though bad,  
 That even rebels, boldest grown  
 By wrongs that make man's patience mad,  
 Do fear to strike against the Crown,

## VI.

Yet happy folk makes happy king :  
 And worthiest is that monarch's might  
 Whom freely freemen love, that cling  
 In loyal trust to legal right.

## CLOUDY WEATHER.

## I.

On the cold hill under the sky,  
 Here to-day, in the cloudy weather,  
 The wind, as he pass'd me by,  
 Laugh'd. "They two are walking together  
 Merry, and I know why,  
 For I met them as I came hither."

## II.

The swallows were swinging themselves \*  
 In the leaden-gray air aloft ;  
 Flitting by tens and twelves,  
 And returning oft and oft ;  
 Like the restless thoughts in me,  
 That went, and came, and went,  
 Not letting me even be  
 Alone with my discontent.

## III.

The hard-vext weary vane  
 Rattled, and moan'd, and was still,

In the convent over the plain,  
By the side of the windy hill.  
It was sad to hear it complain  
So fretful, and weak, and shrill,  
Again, and again, and in vain,  
While the wind was changing his will.

## VI.

I thought of her face so bright,  
By the firelight bending low  
O'er her work so neat and white ;  
Of her singing so soft and slow ;  
Of her tender-toned "Good-night ;"  
But a very few nights ago.

## VII.

O'er the convent doors, I could see  
 A pale and sorrowful-eyed  
 Madonna looking at me,  
 As when Our Lord first died.  
 There was not a lizard or spider  
 To be seen on the broken walls.  
 The ruts, with the rain, had grown wider,  
 And blacker since last night's falls.  
 O'er the universal dulness  
 There broke not a single beam.  
 I thought how my love at its fulness  
 Had changed like a change in a dream.

## VIII.

The olives were shedding fast  
 About me to left and right,  
 In the lap of the scornful blast  
 Black berries and leaflets white.  
 I thought " Of the seed I have cast,  
 Not a fruit will be spared by the blight."  
 And the ghosts of my hopes swept past  
 By a cold word put to flight.

## IX.

How many precious seeds,  
 Yet bearing nor beauty nor worth !  
 The smoke of the burning weeds  
 Came up with the steam of the earth,  
 From the red, wet ledges of soil,  
 And the sere vines, row over row,—

And the vineyard-men at their toil,  
Who sang in the vineyard below.

## X.

I thought . . . "Can I live without her  
Whatever she do, or say?"  
I thought . . . "Can I dare to doubt her,  
Now when I have given away  
My whole self, body and spirit,  
To keep, or to cast aside,  
To dower or disinherit,—  
To use as she may decide?"

But her voice, I groan'd, grows colder,  
And her fair face colder still,  
And "Oh!" I thought, . . . "if I behold her  
Walking there with him under the hill!"

## THE STORM.

## I.

Both hollow and hill were as dumb as death,  
While the skies were silently changing for n;  
And the dread forecast of the thunder-storm  
Made the crouch'd land hold in its breath.

## II.

C

But the monstrous vapour as yet was unriven  
 That was breeding the thunder and lightning and  
 rain ;  
 And the wind that was waiting to ruin the plain  
 Was yet fast in some far hold of heaven.

## III.

At the wide-flung casement she stood full height,  
 With her long rolling hair tumbled all down her  
 back ;  
 And, against the black sky's supernatural black,  
 Her white neck gleam'd scornfully white.

## IV.

I could catch not a gleam of her anger'd eyes,  
 (She was sullenly watching the storm-cloud brood)  
 But I felt they were drawing down into her mood  
 The thunder that darken'd the skies.

## V.

And how could I feign, in that heartless gloom,  
 To be carelessly reading that stupid page ?  
 What harm, if I flung it in anguish and rage,  
 Her book, to the end of the room ?

## VI.

“ And so, do we part thus for ever ? ” . . . I said ;  
 “ O speak only one word, and I pardon the rest ! ”  
 She drew her white scarf tighter over her breast,  
 But she never once turn'd round her head.

## VII.

" Ah, must sweet love sourly play with pain ?  
 Or"—I groan'd—" are those dark eyes such deserts  
     of blindness,  
 That, O Woman ! your heart must hoard all its  
     unkindness,  
 For the man on whose breast it hath lain ?

## VIII.

" Speak ! the horrible silence is stifling my soul."  
 She turn'd on me at once all the storm in her eyes ;  
 And I heard the low thunder aloof in the skies,  
 Beginning to mutter and roll.

## IX.

She turn'd—by the lightning reveal'd in its glare,  
 And the tempest had clothed her with terror : it  
     clung  
 To the folds of her vaporous garments, and hung  
 In the heaps of her heavy wild hair.

## X.

• But one word broke the silence ; but one ; and it fell  
     With the weight of a mountain upon me. Next  
     moment  
 The fierce levin flash'd in my eyes. From my com-  
     ment  
 She was gone when I turn'd. Who can tell

## XI.

How I got to my home on the mountain ? I know  
 That the thunder was rolling, the lightning still  
     flashing,

The great bells were tolling, my very brain crashing  
In my head, but a short while ago :

## XII.

Then all hush'd. In the distance the blue rain re-  
ceded ;

And the fragments of storm were spread out on the  
hills ;

Hard by, from my lattice, I heard the far rills  
Leaping down their rock-channels, wild-weeded.

## XIII.

The round, red moon was yet low in the air. . . . .

Oh, I knew it, foresaw it, and felt it, before

I heard her light hand on the latch of the door !

When it open'd at last,—she was there.

## XIV.

Child-like, and wistful, and sorrowful-eyed,

With the rain in her hair, and the rain on her cheek :

She knelt down, with her fair forehead fallen and  
meek

In the light of the moon at my side.

## XV.

And she call'd me by every caressing old name

She of old had invented and chosen for me :

She crouch'd at my feet, with her cheek on my knee,  
Like a wild thing grown suddenly tame.

## XVI.

In the world there are women enough, maids or  
mothers :

Yet, in multiplied millions, I never should find

The symbol of aught in her face, or her mind.  
She has nothing in common with others.

## XVII.

And she loves me ! This morning the earth, press'd  
beneath  
Her light foot, keeps the print. 'Twas no vision  
last night,  
For the lily she dropp'd, as she went, is yet white  
With the dew on its delicate sheath !

## FORBEARANCE.

## I.

CALL me not, Love, unthankful, nor unkind,  
That I have left my heart with thee, and fled :  
I were not worth that wealth which I resign'd,  
Had I not chosen poverty instead.

## II.

Grant me but solitude ! I dare not swerve  
From my soul's rights—a slave, though serving  
thee.  
I but forbear more grandly to deserve :  
The free gift only cometh of the free.

## A LOVE-LETTER.

### I.

My love,—my chosen,—but not mine ! I send  
    My whole heart to thee in these words I write ;  
So let the blotted lines, my soul's sole friend,  
    Lie upon thine, and there be blest at night.

### II.

This flower, whose bruised purple blood will stain  
    The page now wet with the hot tears that fall—  
(Indeed, indeed, I struggle to restrain  
    This weakness, but the tears come, spite of all !)

### III.

I pluck'd it from the branch you used to praise,  
    The branch that hides the wall. I tend your flowers.  
I keep the paths we paced in happier days.  
    How long ago they seem, those pleasant hours !

### IV.

The white laburnum's out. Your judas-tree  
    Begins to shed those crimson buds of his.  
The nightingales sing—ah, too joyously !  
    Who says those birds are sad ? I think there is

### V.

That in the books we read, which deeper wrings  
    My heart, so they lie dusty on the shelf.  
Ah me, I meant to speak of other things  
    Less sad. In vain ! they bring me to myself.

VI.

I know your patience. And I would not cast  
New shade on days so dark as yours are grown  
By weak and wild repining for the past,  
Since it is past for ever, O my Own !

VII.

For hard enough the daily cross you bear,  
Without that deeper pain reflection brings ;  
And all too sore the fretful household care,  
Free of the contrast of remember'd things.

VIII.

But ah ! it little profits, that we thrust  
From all that's said what both must feel, unnamed.  
Better to face it boldly, as we must,  
Than feel it in the silence, and be shamed.

IX.

Irene, I have loved you, as men love  
Light, music, odour, beauty, love itself ;—  
Whatever is apart from, and above  
Those daily needs which deal with dust and pelf.

X.

And I had been content, without one thought  
Our guardian angels could have blusht to know,  
So to have lived and died, demanding nought  
Save, living, dying, to have loved you so.

## XI.

My youth was orphan'd, and my age will be  
Childless. I have no sister. None, to steal  
One stray thought from the lifelong thoughts of thee,  
Which are the fountains of whate'er I feel.

## XII.

My wildest wish was vassal to thy will :  
My haughtiest hope, a pensioner on thy smile,  
Which did with light my barren being fill,  
As moonlight glorifies some desert isle.

## XIII.

I never thought, to know what I have known,—  
The rapture, Dear, of being loved by you :  
I never thought, within my heart, to own  
One wish so blest, that you should share it too :

## XIV.

Nor ever did I deem, contemplating  
The many sorrows in this place of pain,  
So strange a sorrow to my life could cling,  
As, being thus loved, to be beloved in vain.

## XV.

But now we know the best, the worst. We have  
Interr'd, and prematurely, and unknown,  
Our youth, our hearts, our hopes, in one small grave,  
Whence we must wander, widow'd, to our own.

## LYRICAL.

### XVI.

And if we comfort not each other, what  
Shall comfort us in the dark days to come ?  
Not the light laughter of the world, and not  
The faces and the firelight of fond home.

### XVII.

And so I write to you ; and write, and write,  
For the mere sake of writing to you, Dear.  
What can I tell you that you know not ? Night  
Is deepening through the rosy atmosphere

### XVIII.

About the lonely casement of this room,  
Which you have left familiar with the grace  
That grows where you have been. And on the gloom  
I almost fancy I can see your face :

### XIX.

Not pale with pain, and tears restrain'd for me,  
As when I last beheld it ; but as first,  
A dream of rapture and of poesy,  
Upon my youth, like dawn on dark, it burst.

### XX.

Perchance I shall not ever see again  
That face. I know that I shall never see  
Its radiant beauty as I saw it then,  
Save by this lonely lamp of memory,

## XXI.

With childhood's starry graces lingering yet  
 I' the rosy orient of young womanhood ;  
 And eyes like woodland violets newly wet ;  
 And lips that left their meaning in my blood !

## XXII.

I will not say to you what I might say  
 To one less worthily loved, less worthy love.  
 I will not say . . . 'Forget the past. Be gay.  
 And let the all-ill-judging world approve'

## XXIII.

Light in your eyes, and laughter on your lip.'  
 I will not say . . . 'Dissolve in thought for ever  
 Our sorrowful, but sacred fellowship.'  
 For that would be to bid you, Dear, dissover

## XXIV.

Your nature from its nobler heritage  
 In consolations, register'd in Heaven,  
 For griefs this world is powerless to assuage,  
 And hopes to which, on earth, no home is given.

## XXV.

I will not cant that commonplace of friends,  
 Which never yet hath dried one mourner's tears,  
 Nor say that grief's slow wisdom makes amends  
 For broken hearts and desolated years.

## XXVI.

For who would barter all he hopes from life,  
To be a little wiser than his kind ?  
Who arm his nature for continued strife,  
When all he seeks for hath been left behind ?

## XXVII.

Wherefore it happens, in this riddling world,  
That where sin came not, sorrow yet should be ;  
Why Heaven's most hurtful thunders should be hurl'd  
At what seems noblest in Humanity ;

## XXVIII.

And we are punish'd for our purest deeds,  
And chasten'd for our holiest thoughts ; . . . alas !  
There is no reason found in all the creeds,  
Why these things are, nor whence they come to pass.

## XXIX.

But in the heart of man, a secret voice  
There is, which speaks and will not be restrain'd,  
Which cries to Grief . . . Weep on, while I rejoice,  
Knowing that, somewhere, all will be explain'd.'

## XXX.

And I would say, 'O pure and perfect pearl,  
O love which life hath dived so deep to find,  
Lock'd in life's heart thou liest. The wave may curl,  
The wind may wail above thee. Wave and wind,

## XXXI.

Nor break, nor shake, thee.' Dear, on me and you  
 Life's storms have broken, but our love lives calm.  
 This life of ours, what is it? A very few  
 Soon-ended years, and then,—the ceaseless psalm.

## XXXII.

And the eternal sabbath of the soul!  
 Hush! . . . while I write, from the dim Carmine  
 The midnight angelus begins to roll,  
 And float athwart the darkness up to me.

## XXXIII.

My messenger (a man by danger tried)  
 Waits in the courts below; and ere our star  
 Upon the forehead of the dawn hath died,  
 Heart of my heart, this letter will be far

## XXXIV.

Athwart the mountain, and the mist, to you.  
 I know each robber hamlet. I know all  
 This mountain people. I have friends, both true  
 And trusted, sworn to aid whate'er befall.

## XXXV.

I have a bark upon the gulf. And I,  
 If to my heart I yielded in this hour,  
 Might say . . . 'Sweet fellow-sufferer, let us fly!  
 I know a little isle which doth embower

## XXXVI.

'A home where exiled angels might forbear  
Awhile to mourn for Paradise.' . . . But no !  
Never, whate'er fate now may bring us, Dear,  
Shalt thou reproach me for that only woe

## XXXVII.

Which even love is powerless to console ;  
Which dwells where duty dies : and haunts the void  
Of life's abandon'd purpose in the soul ;  
The accusing ghost of what itself destroy'd.

## XXXVIII.

Man cannot make, but may ennoble, fate,  
By nobly bearing it. So let us trust  
Death's justice, if not Life's, and calmly wait  
Love's orient, out of darkness and of dust.

## XXXIX.

Farewell, and yet again farewell, and yet  
Never farewell,—if farewell mean to fare  
Alone and disunited. Love hath set  
Our days, in music, to the self-same air ;

## XL.

And I shall feel, wherever we may be,  
Even though in absence and an alien clime,  
The shadow of the sunniness of thee,  
Hovering, in patience, through a clouded time.

## XLI.

Farewell ! The dawn is rising, and the light  
 Is making, in the east, a faint endeavour  
 To illuminate the mountain peaks. Good night,  
 Thine own, and only thine, my love, for ever.

## THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST.

NEVER, dear, distant angel of my sorrow,  
 Never more thy sweet solacings, to cheer me,  
 Eve shall vouchsafe, no morrow  
 Come with the comfort of thy beauty near me !

Long since disparted travellers, we may not  
 Flatter life's lone ways even with a semblance  
 Of hand in hand. Yet say not  
 Vain is the restless rapture of remembrance.

Memories, Dearest, are the sole possessions  
 Man may bear with him over the Dark River.

Brief are our pains, our passions,  
 We in their memories do live for ever.

Thou, by the lilded lawn, the arbute bowers,  
 Dwellest, and where 'mid old Italian fountains,  
 Pause the blue breathless hours  
 Ere they move westward o'er the happy mountains.

Thee, life eluding in thy green recesses,  
 Change cannot reach abruptly. Time shall sprinkle  
     Snow on thy golden tresses  
 Slowly, and slowly bring the brow's first wrinkle.

I, still pursuing with a fretful fever  
 Far off the wandering planet of the distance,  
     Footsore, do fare for ever  
 O'er the dry deserts of a scorch'd existence.

What may renew the old, the happy hours ?  
 Memories of thee, ever youthful-hearted,  
     'Mid unforgotten flowers  
 Beckon back time into the days departed.

Whether, by Danube darkening to the ocean,  
 I through the gateways of the Orient wander,  
     Or where, with gentle motion,  
 Thames' fluent lengths among the lawns meander,

Still, like a gliding ghost, from my own presence  
 Nightly I steal forth to the ancient places,  
     And, with the rose's essence,  
 Follow thee through the Garden of the Graces.

Place me where, 'neath the red Arabian heaven,  
 All in a camel-colour'd land, unbroken  
     By man's abodes, not even  
 Nature leaves one sick palm-tree for a token,

Place me where round bleak Baltic headlands, piling  
 Pale foam, the chafed sea spends his last endeavour,  
     Still shall I see thee smiling  
 Sweetly, still hear thee sweetly talking ever.

## NIGHT.

COME to me, not as once thou camest, Night !  
With light and splendour up the gorgeous West ;  
Easing the heart's rich sense of thee with sighs  
Sobb'd out of all emotion on Love's breast ;  
While the dark world waned wavering into rest,  
Half seen athwart the dim delicious light  
Of languid eyes :

But softly, soberly ; and dark—more dark !  
Till my life's shadow lose itself in thine.  
Athwart the light of slowly-gathering tears,  
That come between me and the starlight, shine  
From distant melancholy deeps divine,  
While day slips downward through a rosy arc  
To other spheres.

## HOME-SICKNESS.

I, often lying lonely, over seas,  
At ope of day, soft-couch'd in foreign land,  
Dream a green dream of England ; when young trees  
Make murmur, and the amber-striped bees  
To search the woodbine through, a busy band,  
Come floating at the casement, while new tann'd

And tedded hay sends fresh on morning breeze  
Incense of sunny fields, through curtains fann'd  
With invitations faint to Far-away.  
So dreaming, half-awake, at ope of day,  
    Dream I of daisy greens, and village pales,  
And the white winking of the warmèd may  
    In blossomy hedge, and brown oak-leavèd dales,  
And little children dear, at dewy play,  
Till all my heart grows young and glad as they ;  
    And sweet thoughts come and go, like scented gales,  
Through an open window when the month is gay.

But often, wandering lonely, over seas,  
At shut of day, in unfamiliar land,  
What time the serious light is on the leas,  
To me there comes a sighing after ease  
    Much wanted, and an aching wish to stand  
    Knee-deep in English grass, and have at hand  
A little churchyard cool, with native trees,  
    And grassy mounds thick-laced with ozier band,  
Wherein to rest at last, nor further stray.  
So, sad of heart, muse I, at shut of day,  
    On safe and quiet England ; till thought ails  
With inward groanings deep for meadows gray,  
    Gray copses cool with twilight, shady dales,  
Home-gardens, full of rest, where never may  
    Come loud intrusion ; and, what chiefly fails  
My sick desire, old friendships fled away.  
I am much vexed with loss. Kind Memory, lay  
    My head upon thy lap, and tell me tales  
Of the good old time, when all was pure and gay !

## THE HEART AND NATURE.

### I.

THE lake is calm ; and, calm, the skies  
     In yonder cloudless sunset glow,  
 Where, o'er the woodland, homeward flies  
     The solitary crow ;

### II.

No moan the cushat makes to heave  
     A leaflet round her windless nest ;  
 The air is silent in the eve ;  
     The world's at rest.

### III.

All bright below ; all pure above ;  
     No sense of pain, no sign of wrong ;  
 Save in thy heart of hopeless love,  
     Poor Child of Song !

### IV.

Why must the soul through Nature rove,  
     At variance with her general plan ?  
 A stranger to the Power, whose love  
     Soothes all save Man ?

### V.

Why lack the strength of meaner creatures ?  
     The wandering sheep, the grazing kine,

Are surer<sup>o</sup> of their simple natures  
Than I of mine.

## VI.

For all their wants the poorest land  
Affords supply ; they browse and breed ;  
I scarce divine, and ne'er have found,  
What most I need.

## VII.

O God, that in this human heart  
Hath made Belief so hard to grow,  
And set the doubt, the pang, the smart  
In all we know—

## VIII.

Why hast thou, too, in solemn jest  
At this tormented Thinking-power,  
Inscribed, in flame on yonder West,  
In hues on every flower,

## IX.

Through all the vast unthinking sphere  
Of mere material Force without,  
Rebuke so vehement and severe  
To the least doubt ?

## X.

And robed the world, and hung the night,  
With silent, stern, and solemn forms ;  
And strown with sounds of awe, and might,  
The seas and storms ;—

## XI.

All lacking power to impart  
 To man the secret he assails,  
 But arm'd to crush him, if his heart  
 Once doubts or fails !

## XII.

To make him feel the same forlorn  
 Despair, the Fiend hath felt ere now,  
 In gazing at the stern sweet scorn  
 On Michael's brow ?

## AUTUMN.

## I.

So now, then, Summer's over—by degrees.  
 Hark ! 'tis the wind in yon red region grieves.  
 Who says the world grows better, growing old ?  
 See ! what poor trumpery on those pauper treees,  
 That cannot keep, for all their fine gold leaves,  
 Their last bird from the cold.

## II.

This is Dame Nature, pucker'd, pinch'd, and sour,  
 Of all the charms, her poets praised, bereft,  
 Scowling, and scolding (only hear her, there !)  
 Like that old spiteful Queen, in her last hour,  
 Whom Spenser, Shakespeare sung to . . . nothing  
 left  
 But wrinkles, and red hair !

## THE SWALLOW.

O SWALLOW chirping in the spangled eaves,  
Why hast thou left far south thy fairy homes,  
To build between these drenched April-leaves,  
And sing me songs of Spring before it comes ?  
Too soon thou singest ! Yon black stubborn thorn  
Bursts not a bud : the sneaping wind drifts on.  
She that once flung thee crumbs, and in the morn  
Sang from the lattice where thou sing'st, is gone.  
Here is no Spring. Thy flight yet further follow.  
Fly off, vain swallow !

Thou com'st to mock me with remember'd things.  
I love thee not, O bird for me too gay.  
That which I want thou hast—the gift of wings :  
Grief—which I have—thou hast not. Fly away !  
What hath my roof for thee ? my cold dark roof,  
Beneath whose weeping thatch thine eggs will  
freeze !  
Summer will halt not here, so keep aloof.  
Others are gone ; go thou. In those wet trees  
I see no Spring though thou still singest of it.  
Fare hence, false prophet !

## MEETING AGAIN.

### I.

YES ; I remember the white rose. And since then  
the young ivy has grown ;  
From your window we could not reach it, and now it  
is over the stone.  
We did not part as we meet, Dear. Well, Time hath  
his own stern cures !  
And Alice's eyes are deeper, and her hair has grown  
like yours.

### II.

Is our greeting all so strange then ? But there's  
something here amiss,  
When it is not well to speak kindly. And the olives  
are ripe by this.  
I had not thought you so alter'd. But all is changed,  
God knows !  
Good-night. It is night so soon now. Look there !  
You have dropt your rose.

### III.

Nay, I have one that is wither'd and dearer to me.  
I came  
To say good-night, little Alice. She does not re-  
member my name.  
It is but the damp that is making my head and my  
heart ache so.  
I never was strong in the old time, as the others were,  
you know.

## IV.

And you'll sleep well, will you not, Darling ? The  
old words sound so dear !  
'Tis the last time I shall use them ; you need show  
neither anger nor fear.  
It is well that you look so cheerful. And is time so  
smooth with you ?  
How foolish I am ! Good-night, Dear. And bid  
Alice good-night too.

## OLD AND NEW.

## I.

All in its place as of old !  
Nothing changed to the eye.  
The moss'd rust-tinted mass  
Of the Manse in the meadow grass ;  
The half-moon afloat in a sky  
Gray, neither warm nor cold.  
All in its place as of old,  
Nothing changed to the eye !  
High over the mildewy pane  
Of the long, low granary room,  
In the mothy, moist ground-story,  
The grass ripples russet, and hoary  
With the cuckoo-flowers in bloom,  
That mix their sick perfume

With the earthy smell of the rain,  
 Clinging under each violet stain  
     Of the streak'd and showery gloom.  
 The red beech weepeth ;  
 The cuckoo calleth ;  
     In the fields afar  
         Night waits.  
 The silence sleepeth ;  
 The twilight falleth,  
 And the dim yellow star  
     Dilates.  
 All in the dew  
 Hath the self-same hue.  
 Nothing looks new.

## II.

Nothing changed to the eye ;  
 Yet something is not as of old.  
     Where, and what, is the change ?  
         All is the same, yet strange.  
 My very heart grows cold ;  
 My lightest breath is a sigh.  
 Between the earth and the sky,  
     Something is not as of old.  
 The buttercup's glimmering gold !  
 And the vetch with the purple dye !  
     And the wall-flower fading fast !  
         And the reeds in the creek where, aghast,  
 The stream like a ghost flits by,  
 With a moan to the watery sky,

Grazing the bulrush cold !  
 All in its place as of old,  
     Nothing changed to the eye !  
     The thin wave fleeteth ;  
     The white sail glideth ;  
     The blue reeds sigh  
         To the shore.  
     The light retreateth ;  
     The place abideth  
 Under my eye,  
         As of yore.  
     But the very dew  
     Doth chill me through.  
     All things feel new.

## III.

Ah, memory is of the brain !  
 The heart remembers not ;  
     The heart can never recall ;  
     It feels, it hath felt, that is all ;  
     And a feeling unforgot  
 Is a feeling felt again.  
 This is a joy which the brain  
     Renews, but the heart cannot.  
 I recall what I felt of old,  
     But I feel, not what I recall.  
     This,—this is the change !  
     This is why all feels strange !  
 Happy for man, after all,  
     That is Eden, after his fall,

God suffer'd him not to behold !  
 What I never may feel as of old  
     I would I might never recall.  
     But the river glideth ;  
         The red beech weepeth ;  
         The reeds to the shore  
             Still sigh.  
         The place abideth ;  
         The dead Past keepeth  
     The form it first wore  
         To the eye.  
         Ah few, how few,  
         In the heart can renew  
     What the eye may review !

### EARTH'S HAVINGS.

WEARY, the cloud falleth out o' the sky,  
     Dreary the leaf lieth low.  
 All things must come to the earth by and by,  
     Out of which all things grow.

Let the wild wind laugh and whistle  
     Aloof in the lonesome wood ;  
 In our garden let the thistle  
     Start where the rose-tree stood ;  
 Let the rotting moss fall rotten  
     With the rain-drops from the eaves ;

Let the dead Past lie forgotten  
In his grave, with the yellow leaves.

Weary the cloud falleth out o' the sky,  
Dreary the leaf lieth low.

All things must come to the earth by and by,  
Out of which all things grow.

And again the hawthorn pale  
Shall blossom sweet i' the spring ;

And again the nightingale  
In the deep blue nights shall sing ;  
And seas o' the wind shall wave  
In the light of the golden grain ;  
But the love that is gone to his grave  
Shall never return again.

Weary the cloud falleth out o' the sky,  
Dreary the leaf lieth low.

All things must come to the earth by and by,  
Out of which all things grow.

### A FAREWELL.

#### I.

Be happy, child. The last wild words are spoken.  
To-morrow, mine no more, the world will claim thee.  
I blame thee not, but all my life is broken ;  
Of what hath been I save not even a token.  
Never in years to come my lips shall name thee,  
Never, child, never.

## II.

I will not say 'Forget me,' nor those hours  
 Which were so sweet. Some scent dead leaves retain.  
 Keep all the flowers I gave thee—all the flowers,  
 Dead! dead! Though years on years of life were ours,  
 As we have met we shall not meet again,  
 For ever, child ! for ever !

## FUTILITY.

## I.

LET us not be dissatisfied  
 With Nature. She is in her right.  
 I neither blame thee, Sweet, nor chide.  
 As, on a clear spring night,

## II.

The cold encumbrance of the snow  
 Drops from the bosom of the hills,  
 So all my life from thine lets go,  
 And all its weight of ills

## III.

Drops from thee. Set thy smooth smile free,  
 Assert thy youth, bloom forth unblamed  
 Beyond me ! Whatsoe'er we be,  
 Why should we be ashamed ?

## IV.

That which we are, we are. 'Twere vain  
To plant with toil what may not blow.  
The cloud will break and bring the rain,  
Whether we reap, or sow.

## V.

All finds its place. We shall not miss  
God's meaning, whatsoe'er He mean.  
If this were that, or that were this,  
What hath been had not been.

## VI.

Let all be as it is, dear Love.  
There is no better thing than sleep.  
They only fall, that strive to move,  
Or lose, that care to keep.

## VII.

Let go what will not stay. What then ?  
Seed-time, and harvest,—soon, the snow !  
Above the graves of buried men  
The grass hath leave to grow.

## THE CANTICLE OF LOVE.

I HEARD an Angel in the midnight sky,  
That made sweet singing to a golden lute.  
The pole star, and the planets seven, and I  
To his sweet singing did give audience mute ;

Which heard made all things else to seem most sweet,  
Such rapture was in those divine lute-strings !  
Such rapture that Heaven's Seraphs, about his feet,  
Thrill'd to the bright ends of their burning wings.

"The song he singeth," sigh'd those Seraphs fair,  
"Is Love." But I the words had heard elsewhere.

For, when I last was in the nethermost Hell,  
There on a sulphurous headland wild, I heard  
A Spirit pale, that to a hollow shell  
The selfsame song was singing, word for word ;  
Which then so sadly sounded, its sad sound  
Hell's aching heart did heave to deeper pain,  
While Fiends, with foreheads scarr'd, that crouch'd  
around,  
Drooping dark wings, made murmur, "Vain, ah  
vain!"

Yet moan'd those Fiends, "The song he singeth there  
Is Love." But he that sung it was Despair.

### LITTLE ELLA.

I KNOW now, little Ella, what the flowers  
Said to you then, to make your cheek so pale ;  
And why the blackbird in our laurel bowers  
Spake to you, only ; and the poor, pink snail

Fear'd less your steps than those of the May-shower.  
 It was not strange these creatures loved you so,  
 And told you all. 'Twas not so long ago  
 You were, yourself, a bird, or else a flower.

## II.

And, little Ella, you were pale, because  
 So soon you were to die. I know that now.  
 And why there ever seem'd a sort of gauze  
 Over your deep blue eyes, and sad young brow.  
 You were too good to grow up, Ella, you,  
 And be a woman such as I have known !  
 And so upon your heart they put a stone,  
 And left you, Dear, amongst the flowers and dew.

## III.

O thou, the morning star of my dim soul !  
 My little elfin friend from Fairy-Land !  
 Whose memory is yet innocent, of the whole  
 Of that which makes me doubly need thy hand,  
 Thy guiding hand from mine so soon withdrawn !  
 Here where I find so little like to thee.  
 For thou wert as the breath of dawn to me,  
 Starry, and pure, and brief as is the dawn.

## IV.

Thy knight was I, and thou my Fairy Queen.  
 ('Twas in the days of love and chivalry !)  
 And thou didst hide thee in a bower of green.  
 But thou so well hast hidden thee, that I

Have never found thee since. And thou didst set  
 Many a task, and quest, and high emprise,  
 Ere I should win my guerdon from thine eyes,  
 So many, and so many, that not yet

## V.

My tasks are ended, nor my wanderings o'er.  
 But some day there will come across the main  
 A magic barque, and I shall quit this shore  
 Of care, and find thee, in thy bower, again ;  
 And thou wilt say, " My brother, hast thou found  
 Our home at last ? " . . . Whilst I, in answer, Sweet,  
 Shall heap my life's last booty at thy feet,  
 And bare my breast with many a bleeding wound.

## VI.

The spoils of time ! the trophies of a world !  
 The keys of conquer'd towns, and captived kings,  
 And many a broken sword, and banner furl'd,  
 The heads of giants, and swart soldan's rings,  
 And many a maiden's scarf, and many a wand  
 Of baffled wizard, many an amulet,  
 And many a shield with mine own heart's blood  
 wet,  
 And jewels rare from many a distant land !

## VII.

How sweet, with thee, my sister, to renew,  
 In lands of light, the search for those bright birds  
 Of plumage so ethereal in its hue,  
 And music sweeter than all mortal words,

Which some good angel to our childhood sent  
 With messages from Paradisal flowers,  
 So lately left, the scent of Eden bowers  
 Yet linger'd in our hair, where'er we went !

## VIII.

Now, they are all fled by this many a year,  
 Adown the viewless valleys of the wind,  
 And never more will cross this hemisphere,  
 Those birds of passage ! Never shall I find,  
 Dropt from the flight, you follow'd, Dear, so far,  
 That you will never come again, I know,  
 One plumelet on the paths whereby I go  
 Missing thy light there, O my morning star !

## IX.

She pass'd out of my youth, at the still time  
 O' the early light, when all was green and husht.  
 She pass'd, and pass'd away. Some broken rhyme  
 Scrawl'd on the panel or the pane : the crusht  
 And faded rose she dropp'd : the page she turn'd  
 And finish'd not : the ribbon or the knot  
 That flutter'd from her . . . Stranger, harm them  
 not !  
 I keep these sacred relics undiscern'd.

## A FOOTSTEP.

WITHIN my mind there is a garden : part  
 Sprung from the greenest stray-away's of Spring  
 In a dewy time : part by long labouring  
 Of toilful Love, and many a culturing art

Learn'd of skill'd Grief in patientness of heart,  
Nor without weariness, wrought. Deep-blossoming  
Growths of long-planted pain cold shadow fling,  
Sun-proof to every casual golden dart,  
Over one aspect of this haunt. Elsewhere  
Full sunlight sleeps for ever. Many a day  
I lose myself about this quiet place,  
Following one footstep ever the same way.  
Dear, 'tis thy ghostly footstep that I trace,  
But thee thyself I find not here nor there.

## DIVIDED LIVES.

O LIVES beloved, wherein mine once did live,  
Thinking your thoughts, and walking in your ways,  
On your dear presence pasturing all my days,  
In pleasantness, and peace ; whose moods did give  
The measure to my own ! how vainly strive  
Poor Fancy's fingers, numb'd by time, to raise  
This vail of woven years, that from my gaze  
To hide what now you are doth still contrive !  
Dear lives, I marvel if to you yet clings  
Of mine some colour ; and my heart then feels  
Much like the ghost of one who died too young  
To be remember'd well, that sometimes steals  
A family of unsad friends among  
Sighing, and hears them talk of other things.

## REQUIESCAT.

I SOUGHT to build a deathless monument  
To my dead love. Therein I meant to place  
All precious things and rare : as Nature blent  
All single sweetesses in one sweet face.  
I could not build it worthy her mute merit,  
Nor worthy her white brows and holy eyes,  
Nor worthy of her perfect and pure spirit,  
Nor of my own immortal memories.  
But, as some rapt artificer of old,  
To enshrine the ashes of a Virgin Saint,  
Might scheme to work with ivory, and fine gold,  
And carven gems, and legended and quaint  
Seraphic heraldries ; searching far lands,  
Orient and occident, for all things rare,  
To consecrate the toil of reverent hands,  
And make his labour, like her virtue, fair ;  
Knowing no beauty beautiful as she,  
And all his labour void, but to beguile  
A sacred sorrow ; so I work'd. Ah, see  
Here are the fragments of my shatter'd pile !  
I keep them, and the flowers that sprang between  
Their broken workmanship — the flowers and  
weeds !  
Sleep soft among the violets, O my Queen—  
Lie calm among my ruin'd thoughts and deeds.



## THE SHORE.

CAN it be women that walk in the sea-mist, under  
the cliffs there  
Which the unsatisfied surge sucks with importu-  
nate lip ?

There, where out from the sand-chok'd anchors, on  
to the skiffs there,  
Twinkle the slippery ropes, swinging adip and  
adrip ?

All the place in a lurid, glimmering, emerald glory,  
Glares like a Titan world come back under heaven  
again :

Yonder, aloof are the steeps of the sea-kings, famous  
in story ;

But who are they on the beach ? they are neither  
women nor men.

Who knows, are they the land's, or the water's, liv-  
ing creatures ?

Born of the boiling sea ? nurst in the seething  
storms ?

With their woman's hair dishevell'd over their stern  
male features,

Striding, bare to the knee ; magnified maritime  
forms !

They may be the mothers and wives, they may be  
the sisters and daughters  
Of men on the dark mid-seas, alone in those black  
coil'd hulls,  
That toil 'neath yon white cloud, whence the moon  
will rise o'er the waters  
To-night, with her face on fire, if the wind in the  
evening lulls.  
But they may be merely visions, such as only sick  
men witness,  
(Sitting as I sit here, fill'd with a wild regret,) Fram'd from the sea's misshapen spume with a hor-  
rible fitness  
To the winds in which they walk, and the surges  
by which they are wet :—  
Salamanders, seawolves, witches, warlocks ; marine  
monsters  
Which the dying seaman beholds, when the rats  
are swimming away,  
And an Indian wind 'gins hiss from an unknown  
isle, and alone stirs  
The broken cloud which burns on the verge of  
the dead, red day.  
I know not. All in my mind is confused ; nor can  
I dissever  
The mould of the visible world from the shape of  
my thoughts in me.  
The Inward and Outward are fused : and, through  
them, murmur for ever  
The sorrow whose sound is the wind, and the roar  
of the limitless sea.

## THE NORTH.

## I.

By the bleak headlands, where the wind searches  
what he finds never  
O'er the sand-reaches, o'er the blown beaches, home-  
less for ever !  
Here walk the lost Gods o' dark Scandinavia, morn-  
ing and even ;  
Faint pale divinities, realmless and sorrowful, exiled  
from Heaven ;  
Burthen'd with memories of old theogonies ; each  
ruin'd monarchy  
Roaming amazed by seas oblivious of ancient fealty.  
Never, again at the tables of Odin, in their lost  
Banquet Hall,  
Shall they from golden cups drink, hearing golden  
harps, harping high festival,  
Never praise bright-hair'd Freya, in Vingolf, for her  
lost loveliness !  
Never, with Egir, sail round cool moonlit isles of  
green wilderness !

Here on the lone wind, through the long twilight,  
when day is waning,  
Many a hopeless voice near the night is heard coldly  
complaining,

Here, in the glimmering darkness, when winds are  
 dropp'd, and not a seaman sings  
 From cape or foreland, pause, and pass silently, forms  
 of discrowned kings,  
 With sweeping, floating folds of dim garments ;  
 wandering in wonder  
 Of their own aspect ; trooping towards midnight ;  
 feeling for thunder.

## II.

Here, in the afternoon ; while, in her father's boat,  
 heavily laden,  
 Mending the torn nets, sings up the bleak bay the  
 Fisher-Maiden,  
 I too, forlornly wandering, wandering, see, with the  
 mind's eye,  
 Shadows beside me, . . . (hearing the wave moan,  
 hearing the wind sigh.) . . .  
 Shadows, and images balefully beautiful, of days  
 departed :  
 Sounds of faint footsteps, gleams of pale foreheads,  
 make me sad-hearted ;  
 Sad for the lost, irretrievable sweetness of former  
 hours ;  
 Sad with delirious, desolate odours, from faded  
 flowers ;  
 Sad for the beautiful gold hair, the exquisite, ex-  
 quisite graces  
 Of a divine face, hopelessly unlike all other faces !

## III.

O'er the grey sand-hills (where I sit sullenly, full of  
black fancies),  
Nipt by the sea-wind, drench'd by the sea-salt, little  
wild pansies  
Flower, and freshly tremble, and twinkle; sweet  
sisterhoods,  
Lone, and how lovely, with their frail green stems,  
and dark purple hoods !

\* \* \* \* \*

## IV.

Here, even here in the midst of monotonous, fixt  
desolation,  
Nature has touches of tenderness, beauties of young  
variation;  
Where, O my heart, in thy ruin'd, and desolate,  
desolate places,  
Springs there a flow'ret, or gleams there the green  
of a single oasis?  
Hidden, it may be perchance, and I know it not . . .  
hidden yet inviolate,  
Pushes the germ of an unconscious rapture in me,  
like the violet  
Which, on the bosom of March, the snows cover  
and keep till the coming  
Of April, the first bee shall find, when he wanders,  
. . . and welcome it humming.

## V.

Teach me, thou North, where the winds lie in ambush ; the rains, and foul weather  
 Are stored in the house of the storms ; and the snow-flakes are garner'd together ;  
 Where man's stern, dominate, sovereign intelligence holds in allegiance  
 Whatever blue Sirius beholds on this Earth-ball— all seas and all regions ;  
 The iron in the hills' heart ; the spirit in the load-stone ; the ice in the poles ;  
 All powers, all dominions ; ships ; merchandise ; armaments : beasts : human souls ; . . .  
 Teach me thy secrets : teach to refrain, to restrain, to be still ;  
 Teach me unspoken, steadfast endurance ;—the silence of Will !

## THE MERMAIDEN.

## I.

HE was a Prince with golden hair,  
 (In a palace beside the sea,) And I but a little white Mermaiden,  
 And how should he care for me ?

## II.

Last summer I came, in the calm blue nights,  
 To roam through the cool sea-caves :

Last summer he came, when the stars were shining,  
To walk by the lone sea-waves.

## III.

There is no light in the gray sea-groves  
Like the light on his golden hair:  
There be no sweetesses known to the sea-folk  
So sweet as his kisses were.

## IV.

I love him, love him, ah, so well  
That my love hath grown pain in me,  
And to-morrow he weds the Princess, yonder  
In that palace beside the sea.

## SEA-SIDE ELEGIACS.

EVER my heart beateth high and the blood in me  
danceth delighted,  
When, in the wind on the wharf, keen from the  
edge of the land,  
Watching the white-wingèd black-bodied ships, as  
they rise uninvited  
Over the violet-dark wall o' the waters, I stand.  
Wondrous with life that is in them, aware of the  
waters and weathers,  
They to the populous port pass with a will of  
their own.

Merrily singeth the mariner there, as the cable he  
tethers

Tight to the huge iron ring, hung in the green  
glewy stone.

Swept with the spray is the pavement above ; and  
the sea-wind is salt there.

Down on the causeys all day, humming, the mer-  
chants unlade

Marvellous merchandise, while the sea-engines of  
burthen, at halt there,

Shoulder each other, and loll, lazy in shine or in  
shade.

O for the wing o' the gray sea-eagle, that far away  
inland

Croucheth in cave or in creek, waiting the wind  
on the height !

When night cometh, the great north-wind, blowing  
bleak over Finland,

Leapeth, and, lifting aloft, beareth him into the  
night.

O for the wing o' the bird ! and O for the wind o'  
the ocean !

O for the far-way lands ! O for the faces unfound !

Would I were hence ! for my spirit is fill'd with a  
mighty emotion.

Why must the spirit, though wing'd, thus to the  
body be bound ?

Ah, but my heart sinketh low, and the rapturous  
vein is arrested,

When, at the mid o' the night, high on the sha-  
dowy land,

Mournfully watching the ghost-white waves, livid-lipp'd, hollow-breasted,

Sob over shingle and shell, here with my sorrow I stand.

Weary of woe that is in them, fatigued by the violent weathers,

Feebly they tumble and toss, sadly they murmur and moan.

Coldly the moon looketh down through the wan-rolling vapour she gathers

Silently, cloud after cloud, round her companion-less throne.

Dark up above is the wharf ; and the harbour. The night-wind alone there

Goeth about in the night, humming a horrible song.

Black misshapen bulks, coil'd cumbrous things, overthrown there,

Seem as, in sullen dismay, silently suffering wrong.

O for the wing o' the gray sea-eagle, roamer of heaven !

Him doth the wind o' the night bear through the night on its breast,

Over the howling ocean, and unto his ancient haven,

Far in the land that he loves finding the realms of his rest.

O for the wing o' the bird ! and O for the wind o' the ocean !

O for the lands that are left ! O for the faces of eld !

Would I were hence ! for my spirit is fill'd with a mournful emotion.

Why must the spirit, though wing'd, still by the body be held ?

## A NIGHT IN THE FISHERMAN'S HUT.

If the wind had been blowing the Devil this way  
 The midnight could scarcely have grown more un-  
 holy,  
 Or the sea have found secrets more wicked to say  
 To the toothless old crags it is hiding there wholly.

### II.

I love well the darkness. I love well the sound  
 Of the thunder-drift, howling this way over ocean :  
 For 'tis though as in nature my spirit had found  
 A trouble akin to its own fierce emotion.

### III.

The hoarse night may howl herself silent for me !  
 When the silence comes, then comes the howling  
 within.  
 I am drench'd to my knees in the surf of the sea,  
 And wet with the salt bitter rain to the skin.

### IV.

Let it thunder and lighten ! this world's ruin'd angel  
 Is but fool'd by desire like the frailest of men ;  
 Both seek in hysterics life's awful evangel,  
 Then both settle down to life's silence again.

### V.

Well I know the wild spirits of water and air,  
 When the lean morrow turns up his cynical grey,

Will, baffled, revert with familiar despair  
To their old listless work, in their old helpless way.

## VI.

Yonder's the light in the Fisherman's hut :  
But the old wolf himself is, I know, off at sea ;  
And I see through the chinks, though the shutters  
be shut,  
By the firelight that some one is watching for me.

## VII.

Hark ! the horses of ocean that crouch at my feet,  
They are moaning in impotent pain on the beach !  
Lo ! the storm-light, that swathes in its blue wind-  
ing-sheet  
That lone desert of sky, where the stars are dead,  
each !

## VIII.

Holloa, there ! open, you little wild girl !  
Hush, . . . 'tis her soft feet over the floor.  
Stay not to tie up a single dark curl,  
But quick with the candle, and open the door.

## IX.

One kiss ? . . . there's twenty ! . . . but first, take my  
coat there,  
Salt as a sea-sponge, and dripping all through.  
The old wolf, your father, is out in the boat there.  
Hark to the thunder ! . . . we're safe,—I and you.

## X.

Put on the kettle. And now for the cask  
 Of that famous old rum of your father's, the king  
 Would have claw'd on our frontier. There, fill me  
 the flask.

Ah, what a quick, little, neat-handed thing !

## XI.

There's my pipe. Stuff it with black negro-head.  
 Soon I shall be in the cloud-land of glory.  
 Faith, 'tis better with you, Dear, than 'fore the mast-  
 head,  
 With such lights at the windows of night's upper  
 story !

## XII.

Next, over the round open hole in the shutter  
 You may pin up your shawl, . . . lest a mermaid  
 should peep.  
 Come, now, the kettle's beginning to splutter,  
 And the cat recomposes herself into sleep.

## XIII.

Poor little naked feet, . . . put them up there  
 On the black bearskin ; and now nestle here  
 Your head on my shoulder ; while all the dark hair  
 Falls round us like seaweed, the tender warm ear

## XIV.

Pink as a sea-shell, between it out-peeping.  
 What shall we do with this long windy night ?  
 It is all of it ours, choose we waking or sleeping ;  
 To talk, or be still,—in the dark or the light.

## XV.

Will you sing to me songs ? shall I tell to you stories ?  
 Shall the stories, the songs, be of mirth or of woe ?  
 Of Fairyland fair, with its far-away glories ?  
 Or the loves of young lovers who died long ago ?

## XVI.

We have time for each choice. Take the cards from  
 the cupboard,  
 Thumb'd over by every old thief in our crew,  
 And I'll tell you your fortune, you little Dame Hub-  
 bard ;  
 My own has been squander'd on witches like you.

## XVII.

Knave, King, and Queen, all the villainous pack of 'em,  
 I know what they're worth in the game, and have  
 found  
 Upon all the trump-cards the small mark at the back  
 of 'em,  
 The Devil's nail mark, who still cheats us all round.

## CONTRABAND.

## I.

A HEAP of low, dark, rocky coast,  
 Where the blue-black sea sleeps smooth and even :  
 And the sun, just over the reefs at most,  
 In the amber part of a pale blue heaven :

## II.

A village asleep below the pines,  
 Hid up the gray shore from the low slow sun :  
 And a maiden that lingers among the vines,  
 With her feet in the dews, and her locks undone :

## III.

The half-moon melting out of the sky ;  
 And, just to be seen still, a star here, a star there,  
 Faint, high up in the heart of the heaven ; so high  
 And so faint, you can scarcely be sure that they  
 are there :

## IV.

And one of that small, black, raking craft ;  
 Two swivel guns on a round deck handy ;  
 And a great sloop sail with the wind abaft ;  
 And four brown thieves round a cask of brandy.

## V.

That's my life, as I left it last.  
 And what it may be henceforth I know not.  
 But all that I keep of the merry Past,  
 Are trifles like these, which I care to show not :—

## VI.

A leathern flask, and a necklace of pearl ;  
 These rusty pistols, this tatter'd chart, Friend :  
 And the soft dark half of a raven curl ;  
 And, at evening, the thought of a true, true heart,  
 Friend.

## HOW THE SONG WAS MADE.

## I.

I sat low down, at midnight, in a vale  
Mysterious with the silence of blue pines :  
White-cloven by a snaky river-tail,  
Uncoil'd from tangled wefts of silver twines.

## II.

Out of a crumbling castle, on a spike  
Of splinter'd rock, a mile of changeless shade  
Gorged half the landscape. Down a dismal dyke  
Of black hills the sluiced moonbeams streamed,  
and staid.

## III.

I pluck'd blue mugwort, livid mandrakes, balls  
Of blossom'd nightshade, heads of hemlock, long  
White grasses, grown in oozy intervals  
Of marsh, to make ingredients for a song :

## IV.

A song of mourning to embalm the Past—  
The corpse-cold Past—that it should not decay ;  
But in dark vaults of Memory, to the last,  
Endure unchanged : for in some future day

## V.

I will bring my new love to look at it  
 (Laying aside her gay robes for a moment)  
 That, seeing what love came to, she may sit  
 Silent awhile, and muse, but make no comment.

## À L'ENTRESOL.

## I.

HIS graven circle of golden hours  
 The creeping hand of the Time-piece, there  
 In yon bower of milk-white china flowers,  
 Hath rounded unaware :

## II.

While the firelight, flung from the pictured wall  
 On the large and limpid mirror behind,  
 Hath redd'n'd and darken'd down o'er all,  
 As the fire itself declined.

## III.

Something of pleasure, and something of pain  
 There lived in that sinking light. What is it ?  
 Faces I never shall look at again,  
 In places you never will visit,

## IV.

Grew out of the glow of each ardent ember,  
While, under a palely-wavering flame,  
Half of the years life aches to remember  
Reappeared, and died as they came.

## V.

To its dark Forever an hour hath gone  
Since either you or I have spoken :  
Each of us might have been sitting alone  
In a silence so unbroken.

## VI.

I never shall know what made me look up  
(In this cushion'd chair so soft and deep,  
By the table where, over the empty cup,  
I was leaning, half asleep)

## VII.

To catch a gleam on the picture up there  
Of the saint in the wilderness under the oak ;  
And a light on the brow of the bronze Voltaire,  
Like the ghost of a cynical joke :

## VIII.

To mark, in each violet, velvet fold  
Of the curtains that fall 'twixt room and room,  
The dip and dance of the manifold  
Shadows of rosy gloom.

## IX.

O'er the Rembrandt there—the Caracci here—  
 Flutter warmly the ruddy and wavering hues ;  
 And St. Anthony over his book has a leer  
 At the little French beauty by Greuze :

## X.

There—the Leda, weigh'd over her white swan's back,  
 By the weight of her passionate kiss, ere it falls—  
 On the ebony cabinet, glittering black  
 Through its ivory cups and balls :

## XI.

Your scissors and thimble, and work laid away,  
 With its silks, in the scented rose-wood box :  
 The journals, that tell truth every day ;  
 And that novel of Paul de Kock's :

## XII.

The flowers in the vase, with their bells shut close  
 In a dream of the far green fields where they grew :  
 The cards of the visiting people and shows  
 In that bowl with the sea-green hue :

## XIII.

Your shawl, with a queenly droop of its own,  
 Hanging over the arm of the crimson chair :  
 And, last—yourself, as silent as stone,  
 In a flush of the firelight there !

## XIV.

I thought you were reading all this time.  
And was it some wonderful page of your book  
Telling of love, with its glory and crime,  
That has left you that sorrowful look ?

## XV.

For a tear from those dark, deep, humid orbs  
'Neath their lashes, so long, and soft, and sleek,  
All the light in your lustrous eyes absorbs,  
As it trembles over your cheek.

## XVI.

Were you thinking how we, sitting side by side,  
Might be dreaming miles and miles apart ?  
Or if lips could meet over a gulf so wide  
As separates heart from heart ?

## XVII.

Ah, well ! when time is flown, how it fled  
It is better neither to ask nor tell.  
Leave the dead moments to bury their dead.  
Let us kiss and break the spell !

## XVIII.

Come, arm in arm, to the window here ;  
Draw by the thick curtain, and see how, to-night,  
In the clear and frosty atmosphere,  
The lamps are burning bright.

**XIX.**

**It is scarcely so cold, but I and you,**  
**With never a friend to find us out,**  
**May stare at the shops for a moment or two,**  
**And wander a while about.**

**XX.**

**For when in the crowd we have taken our place,**  
**(—Just two more lives to the mighty street there !)**  
**Knowing no single form or face**  
**Of the men and women we meet there,—**

**XXI.**

**Knowing, and known of, none in the whole**  
**Of that crowd all round, but our two selves only,**  
**We shall grow nearer, soul to soul,**  
**Until we feel less lonely.**

**XXII.**

**Here are your bonnet and gloves, dear. There—**  
**How stately you look in that long rich shawl !**  
**Put back your beautiful golden hair,**  
**That never a curl may fall.**

**XXIII.**

**Stand in the firelight . . . so, . . . as you were—**  
**O my heart, how fearfully like her she seem'd !**  
**Hide me up from my own despair,**  
**And the ghost of a dream I dream'd !**

## GOING BACK AGAIN.

## I.

I DREAM'D that I walk'd in Italy  
When the day was going down,  
By a water that flow'd quite silently  
Through an old dim-lighted town :

## II.

Till I came a Palace fair to see :  
Wide open the windows were :  
My love at a window sat, and she  
Beckon'd me up the stair.

## III.

I roam'd through many a corridor  
And many a chamber of state :  
I pass'd through many an open door,  
While the day was growing late :

## IV.

Till I came to the Bridal Chamber at last,  
All dim in the darkening weather.  
The flowers at the window were talking fast,  
And whispering all together.

## V.

The place was so still that I could hear  
Every word that they said :  
They were whispering, busy, and full of fear,  
For somebody there was dead.

## VI.

When I came to the little rose-colour'd room,  
 From the window there flew a bat.  
 The window was open'd upon the gloom :  
 My love at the window sat :

## VII.

She sat with her guitar on her knee,  
 But she was not singing a note,  
 For some one had drawn (ah, who could it be?)  
 A knife across her throat.

## TERRA INCOGNITA.

How sweet it is to sit beside her,  
 When the hour brings nought that's better !  
 All day in my thoughts to hide her,  
 And, with fancies free from fetter,  
 Half remember, half forget, her.  
 Just to find her out by times  
 In my mind, among sweet fancies  
 Laid away :  
 In the fall of mournful rhymes ;  
 In a dream of distant climes ;  
 In the sights a lonely man sees  
 At the dropping of the day ;  
 Grave or gay.

As a maiden sometimes locks  
With old letters, whose contents  
Tears have faded,  
In an old worm-eaten box,  
Some sweet packet of faint scents,  
Silken-braided,  
And forgets it:  
Careless, so I hide  
In my life her love,—  
Fancies on each side,  
Memories heap'd above:—  
There it lies, unspied:  
Nothing frets it.  
On a sudden, when  
Deed, or word, or glance,  
Brings me back again  
To the old romance,  
With what rapture then,—  
When, in its completeness,  
Once my heart hath found it,  
By each sense detected,  
Steals on me the sweetness  
Of the air around it,  
Where it lies neglected!  
Shall I break the charm of this  
In a single minute?  
For some chance with fuller bliss  
Proffer'd in it?  
Secrets unseal'd by a kiss,  
Could I win it?  
"Tis so sweet to linger near her,  
Idly so!

Never reckoning, while I hear her  
     Whispering low,  
 If each whisper will make clearer  
     Bliss or woe ;  
 Never roused to hope or fear her  
     Yes or No !  
 What if, seeking something more  
     Than before,  
 All that's given I displace—  
     Calm and grace—  
 Nothing ever can restore,  
     As of yore,  
     That old quiet face !  
 Quiet skies in quiet lakes,  
     No wind wakes,  
     All their beauty double :  
 But a single pebble breaks  
     Lake and sky to trouble ;  
 Then dissolves the foam it makes  
     In a bubble.  
 With the pebble in my hand,  
 Here, upon the brink, I stand ;  
 Meanwhile, standing on the brink,  
     Let me think !  
 Not for her sake, but for mine,  
 Let those eyes unquestion'd shine,  
     Half divine :  
 Let no hand disturb the rare  
 Smoothness of that lustrous hair  
     Anywhere :  
 Let that white breast never break

Its calm motion—sleep or wake—  
 For my sake.  
 Not for her sake, but for mine,  
 All I might have I resign.  
 Should I glow  
 To the hue—the fragrance fine—  
 The mere first sight of the wine,  
 If I drain'd the goblet low ?  
 Who can know ?  
 With her beauty like the snow,  
 Let her go ! Shall I repine  
 That no idle breath of mine  
 Melts it ? No ! 'Tis better so.  
 All the same, as she came,  
 With her beauty like the snow,  
 Cold, unspotted, let her go !

## MADAME LA MARQUISE.

## I.

THE folds of her wine-dark violet dress  
 Glow over the sofa, fall on fall,  
 As she sits in the air of her loveliness  
 With a smile for each and for all.

## II.

Half of her exquisite face in the shade  
 Which o'er it the screen in her soft hand flings:

Through the gloom glows her hair in its odorous braid:  
In the firelight are sparkling her rings.

## III.

As she leans,—the slow smile half shut up in her eyes  
Beams the sleepy, long, silk-soft lashes beneath ;  
Through her crimson lips, stirr'd by her faint replies,  
Breaks one gleam of her pearl-white teeth :

## IV.

As she leans,—where your eye, by her beauty subdued,  
Droops— from under warm fringes of broidery  
white  
The slightest of feet—silken-slipper'd, protrude,  
For one moment, then slip out of sight.

## V.

As I bend o'er her bosom, to tell her the news,  
The faint scent of her hair, the approach of her  
cheek,  
The vague warmth of her breath, all my senses suffuse  
With HERSELF : and I tremble to speak.

## VI.

So she sits in the curtain'd, luxurious light  
Of that room, with its porcelain, and pictures, and  
flowers,  
When the dark day's half done, and the snow flutters  
white,  
Past the windows in feathery showers.

## VII.

All without is so cold,—'neath the low leaden sky !  
Down the bald, empty street, like a ghost, the  
gendarme

Stalks surly: a distant carriage hums by:—  
All within is so bright and so warm !

## VIII.

But she drives after noon :—then's the time to behold  
her,

With her fair face half hid, like a ripe peeping rose,  
'Neath that veil,—o'er the velvets and furs which  
enfold her,—

Leaning back with a queenly repose,

## IX.

As she glides up the sunlight! . . . You'd say she was  
made

To loll back in a carriage, all day, with a smile ;  
And at dusk, on a sofa, to lean in the shade  
Of soft lamps, and be woo'd for a while.

## X.

Could we find out her heart through that velvet and  
lace !

Can it beat without ruffling her sumptuous dress?  
She will show us her shoulder, her bosom, her face ;  
But what the heart's like, we must guess.

## XI.

With live women and men to be found in the world—  
(—Live with sorrow and sin,—live with pain and  
with passion,—)

Who could live with a doll, though its locks should  
be curl'd,  
And its petticoats trimm'd in the fashion ?

'Tis so fair! . . . would my bite, if I bit it, draw blood?  
 Will it cry if I hurt it? or scold if I kiss?  
 Is it made, with its beauty, of wax or of wood?  
 . . . Is it worth while to guess at all this?

## AUX ITALIENS.

## I.

At Paris it was, at the Opera there;—  
 And she look'd like a Queen of old time that night,  
 With the wreathèd pearls in her raven hair,  
 And her breast with the diamond bright.

## II.

The moon on the tower slept soft as snow:  
 And who was not thrill'd in the strangest way,  
 As the Troubadour sung while the gas burn'd low,  
 'Non ti scordar di me?'

## III.

Side by side in our box we sat,  
 Together, my bride-betroth'd and I:  
 My gaze was fix'd on my opera-hat,  
 And hers on the stage hard by:

## IV.

And both were silent, and both were sad.  
 Queenly she lean'd on her full white arm,  
 With that regal, indolent air she had;  
 So confident of her charm!

## V.

I have not a doubt she was thinking then  
    Of her former lord, good soul that he was !  
Who died the richest, and roundest of men,  
    The Marquis of Carabas.

## VI.

That narrow gate to the kingdom of heaven,  
    He was not too portly, I trust, to pass.  
I wish him well, for the jointure given  
    To my lady of Carabas.

## VII.

Meanwhile, I was thinking of my first love,  
    As I had not been thinking of aught for years,  
Till over my eyes there began to move  
    Something that felt like tears.

## VIII.

I thought of the dress that she wore last time,  
    When we stood, 'neath the cypress trees, together,  
In that lost land, in her own soft clime,  
    In the crimson evening weather,

## IX.

By the broken wall, on the brown grass plot ;  
    And her warm white neck in its golden chain :  
And her full, soft hair, wound into a knot,  
    And falling loose again :

## X.

And the jasmin-flower in her fair young breast :  
 (O the faint, sweet smell of that jasmin-flower !)  
 And the last bird singing alone to his nest :  
 And the first star over the tower.

## XI.

I thought of our little quarrels and strife ;  
 And the letter that brought me back my ring.  
 And it all seem'd then, in the waste of life,  
 Such a very little thing !

## XII.

For I thought of her grave below the hill,  
 Which the sentinel cypress tree stands over.  
 And I thought . . . ' were she only living still,  
 How I could forgive her, and love her !'

## XIII.

And I swear, as I thought of her thus, in that hour,  
 And of how, after all, old things were best,  
 That I smelt the smell of that jasmin-flower,  
 Which she used to wear in her breast.

## XIV.

It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,  
 It made me creep, and it made me cold !  
 Like the scent that steals from the crumbling sheet  
 Where a mummy is half unroll'd.

## XV.

And I turn'd and look'd. She was sitting there  
In a dim box, over the stage; and drest  
In the dress that I knew, with her full soft hair,  
And that jasmin in her breast!

## XVI.

She was there : and I was here :  
And the glittering horse-shoe curved between :—  
And from here to there, and from tier to tier,  
From my bride that was to have been,

## XVII.

To my early love, with her eyes downcast,  
And over her blush-rose face the shade,  
(In short from the Future back to the Past)  
There was but a step to be made.

## XVIII.

To my early love from my future bride  
One moment I look'd. Then I stole to the door,  
I traversed the passage ; and down at her side  
I was sitting, a moment more.

## XIX.

My thinking of her, or the music's strain,  
Or something that never will be exprest,  
Had brought her back from the grave again,  
With the jasmin in her breast.

## XX.

She is not dead, and she is not wed !

But she loves me now, and she loved me then !  
 And the very first word that her sweet lips said,  
 My heart grew youthful again.

## XXI.

The Marchioness there, of Carabas,

She is wealthy, and young, and handsome still,  
 And but for her . . . well, we'll let that pass,  
 She may marry whomever she will.

## XXII.

But I will marry my own first love,

With her blush-rose face : for old things are best ;  
 And the flower in her bosom, I prize it above  
 The brooch in my lady's breast.

## XXIII.

The world is fill'd with folly and sin,

And Love must cling where it can, I say :  
 For Beauty is easy enough to win ;  
 But one isn't loved every day.

## XXIV.

And I think, in the lives of most women and men,  
 There's a moment when all would go smooth and  
 even,

If only the dead could find out when  
 To come back, and be forgiven.

## THE CASTLE OF KING MACBETH.

## I.

THIS is the castle of King Macbeth.  
And here he feasts—when the daylight wanes,  
And the moon goes softly over the heath—  
His Earls and Thanes.

## II.

A hundred harpers with harps of gold  
Harp thorough the night high festival :  
And the sound of the music they make is roll'd  
From hall to hall.

## III.

They drink, they sing, till the rafters rock  
In the Banquet Hall ; and the shout is borne  
To the courts outside, where the crowing cock  
Is waked ere morn.

## IV.

They sing, they dance, till the raven is stirr'd  
On the wicked elm-tree outside in the gloom :  
And the rustle of silken robes is heard  
From room to room.

## V.

But there is one room in that castle old,  
 In a lonely turret where no one goes,  
 And a dead man sits there, stark and cold,  
 Whom no one knows.

## THE PORTRAIT.

## I.

MIDNIGHT past ! Not a sound of aught  
 Through the silent house, but the wind at his  
 prayers.  
 I sat by the dying fire, and thought  
 Of the dear dead woman upstairs.

## II.

A night of tears ! for the gusty rain  
 Had ceased, but the eaves were dripping yet ;  
 And the moon look'd forth, as though in pain,  
 With her face all white and wet :

## III.

Nobody with me, my watch to keep,  
 But the friend of my bosom, the man I love :  
 And grief had sent him fast to sleep  
 In the chamber up above.

## IV.

Nobody else, in the country place  
 All round, that knew of my loss beside,  
 But the good young Priest with the Raphael-face,  
 Who confess'd her when she died.

## V.

That good young Priest is of gentle nerve,  
And my grief had moved him beyond control ;  
For his lip grew white, as I could observe,  
When he speeded her parting soul.

## VI.

I sat by the dreary hearth alone :  
I thought of the pleasant days of yore :  
I said “the staff of my life is gone :  
The woman I love is no more.

## VII.

“ Gem-clasp'd, on her bosom my portrait lies,  
Which next to her heart she used to wear—  
It is steep'd in the light of her loving eyes,  
And the sweets of her bosom and hair.”

## VIII.

And I said—“the thing is precious to me :  
They will bury her soon in the churchyard clay ;  
It lies on her heart, and lost must be,  
If I do not take it away.”

## IX.

I lighted my lamp at the dying flame,  
And crept up the stairs that creak'd for fright,  
Till into the chamber of death I came,  
Where she lay all in white.

## X.

The moon shone over her winding-sheet.  
 There, stark she lay on her carven bed :  
 Seven burning tapers about her feet,  
 And seven about her head.

## XI.

As I stretch'd my hand, I held my breath ;  
 I turn'd, as I drew the curtains apart :  
 I dared not look on the face of death :  
 I knew where to find her heart.

## XII.

I thought, at first, as my touch fell there,  
 It had warm'd that heart to life, with love ;  
 For the thing I touch'd was warm, I swear,  
 And I could feel it move.

## XIII.

'Twas the hand of a man, that was moving slow  
 O'er the heart of the dead,—from the other side :  
 And at once the sweat broke over my brow,  
 "Who is robbing the corpse?" I cried.

## XIV.

Opposite me, by the tapers' light,  
 The friend of my bosom, the man I loved,  
 Stood over the corpse, and all as white,  
 And neither of us moved.

## xv.

“What do you here, my friend?” . . . The man  
 Look’d first at me, and then at the dead.  
 “There is a portrait here . . .” he began ;  
 “There is. It is mine,” I said.

## xvi.

Said the friend of my bosom, “yours, no doubt,  
 The portrait was, till a month ago,  
 When this suffering angel took that out,  
 And placed mine there, I know.”

## xvii.

“This woman, she loved me well,” said I.  
 “A month ago,” said my friend to me :  
 “And in your throat,” I groan’d, “you lie !”  
 He answer’d . . . “let us see.”

## xviii.

“Enough !” I return’d, “let the dead decide :  
 And whose soever the portrait prove,  
 His shall it be, when the cause is tried,  
 Where Death is arraign’d by Love.”

## xix.

We found the portrait there, in its place :  
 We open’d it by the tapers’ shine :  
 The gems were all unchanged : the face  
 Was—neither his nor mine.

## XX.

“One nail drives out another, at least!  
 The face of the portrait there,” I cried,  
 “Is our friend’s, the Raphael-faced young Priest,  
 Who confess’d her when she died.”

## THE ALOE.

## I.

A STRANGER sent from burning lands,  
 In realms where buzz and mutter yet  
 Old gods, with hundred heads and hands,  
 On jewell’d thrones of jet,—

## II.

(Old gods as old as Time himself,) And, in a hot and heavy calm,  
 Recline o’er many a sandy shelf Dusk forms beneath the palm,—

## III.

To Lady Eve, who dwells beside  
 The river-meads, and oak-trees tall,  
 Whose dewy shades encircle wide  
 Her old Baronial Hall,

## IV.

An Indian plant with leaves like horn,  
 And, all, along its stubborn spine,

Mere humps, with angry spike and thorn  
 Arm'd, like the porcupine.

## v.

In midst of which one sullen bud  
 Survey'd the world, with head aslant,  
 High-throned, and looking like the god  
 Of this strange Indian plant.

## VI.

A stubborn plant, from looking cross  
 It seem'd no kindness could retrieve !  
 But for his sake whose gift it was  
 It pleased the Lady Eve.

## VII.

She set it on the terraced walk,  
 Within her own fair garden-ground ;  
 And every morn and eve its stalk  
 Was duly water'd round.

## VIII.

And every eve and morn, the while  
 She tended this uncourteous thing,  
 I stood beside her,—watch'd her smile,  
 And often heard her sing.

## IX.

The roses I at times would twist  
 To deck her hair, she oft forgot ;  
 But never that dark aloe miss'd  
 The daily watering-pot.

## X.

She seem'd so gay,—I felt so sad,—  
 Her laugh but made me frown the more :  
 For each light word of hers I had  
 Some sharp reply in store.

## XI.

Until she laugh'd . . . "This aloe shows  
 A kindlier nature than your own" . . .  
 Ah Eve, you little dream'd what foes  
 The plant and I had grown !

## XII.

At last, one summer night, when all  
 The garden-flowers were dreaming still,  
 And still the old Baronial Hall,  
 The oak-trees on the hill,

## XIII.

A loud and sudden sound there stirr'd,  
 As when a thunder-cloud is torn ;  
 Such thunder-claps are only heard  
 When little gods are born.

## XIV.

The peacocks scream'd, and every rook  
 Upon the elms at roost did caw :  
 Each inmate straight the house forsook :  
 They search'd—and, last,—they saw

## XV.

That sullen bud to flower had burst  
 Upon the sharp-leaved aloe there ;—  
 A wondrous flower ; whose breath disperst  
 Rich odours on the air :

## XVI.

A flower, colossal—dazzling white,  
 And fair as is a Sphynx's face,  
 Turn'd broadly to the moon by night  
 From some vast temple's base.

## XVII.

Yes, Eve ! your aloe paid the pains  
 With which its sullen growth you nurst.  
 But, ah ! my nature still remains  
 As churlish as at first.

## XVIII.

And yet, and yet—it might have proved  
 Not all unworth your heart's approving.  
 Ah, had I only been beloved,—  
 (Beloved as I was loving !)

## XIX.

I might have been . . . how much, how much,  
 I am not now, and shall not be !  
 One gentle look, one tender touch,  
 Had done so much for me !

## XX.

I too, perchance, if kindly tended,  
 Had roused this napping generation  
 With something novel, strange, and splendid,  
 Deserving admiration :

## XXI.

For all the while there grew, and grew  
 A germ,—a bud, within my bosom :  
 No flower, fair Eve !—for, thanks to you,  
 It never came to blossom.

## SPRING AND WINTER.

## I.

Was it well in him, if he  
 Felt not love, to speak of love so ?  
 If he still unmoved must be,  
 Was it nobly sought to move so ?  
 —Pluck the flower, but not to wear it—  
 Spurn it from him, yet not spare it ?

## II.

Need he say that I was fair,  
 With such meaning in his tone,  
 Adding ever that her hair  
 Had the same tinge as my own ?  
 Pluck my life up, root and bloom,  
 To make garlands for her tomb ?

## III.

And, her eyes, though deep their light,  
Were less deep, he said, than mine,  
And her brow, though white, less white  
Than this blue-vein'd crystalline ;  
But 'twas just that he loved then  
More than he can love again.

## IV.

Then, if beauty could not bind him,  
Wherefore praise me, speaking low ?  
Use my face just to remind him  
How no face could please him now ?  
Why, if loving could not move him,  
Did he teach me still to love him ?

## V.

“ Yes !” he said, “ he had grown wise now :  
He had suffer'd much of yore :  
But a fair face to his eyes now,  
Was a fair face, and no more.  
Yet the anguish and the bliss,  
And the dream too, had been his.”

## VI.

Ah, those words a thought too tender  
For the common-places spoken !  
Looks whose meaning seem'd to render  
Help to words when speech came broken !  
Why so late in July moonlight  
Just to say what's said by noonlight ?

## LYRICAL.

### VII.

And why praise my youth for gladness,  
Keeping something in his smile  
That changed all my youth to sadness,  
He still smiling all the while?  
Since, when so my youth was over,  
He said "seek some younger lover!"

### VIII.

Well, the Spring's back now! the thrushes  
Are astir as heretofore,  
And the apple-blossom blushes  
As of old about the door.  
Does he taste a finer bliss,  
I must wonder, in all this,

### IX.

(Winning thus what I have lost)  
By the usage of my youth?  
—I can feel my forehead crost  
By the wrinkle's fretful tooth,  
While the grey grows in my hair,  
And the cold creeps everywhere.

## CHANGES.

### I.

WOULD we had met not,—we that might not wed!  
Time rules us all. And Life, indeed, is not  
The thing we plann'd it out ere hope was dead.  
And then, we women cannot choose our lot.

## II.

Much must be borne which it is hard to bear :  
Much given away which it were sweet to keep.  
The deed that never hath been done, the tear  
That never hath been wept,—who knows how deep

## III.

These lurk in unlived lives ? Ourselves behind  
Ourselves we leave, and miss what most we seek :  
In our own memories our graves we find,  
And, when we lean upon our hearts, they break.

My little boy begins to babble now  
Upon my knee his earliest infant prayer.  
He has his father's eager eyes, I know,  
And, they say too, his mother's sunny hair.

## V.

But when he sleeps and smiles upon my knee,  
And I can feel his light breath come and go,  
I think of one (God help and pity me !)  
Who loved me, and whom I loved, long ago.

## VI.

Who might have been . . . ah, what I dare not think !  
The thing which must be, must be for the best.  
God help us do our duty, and not shrink,  
And trust in Heaven humbly for the rest.

## VII.

But blame us women not, if some appear  
 Too cold at times; and some too gay and light.  
 The life unlived, the deed undone, the tear  
 Unshed, . . . not judging these, who judges right?

## VIII.

Were we but judged by what we might have been,  
 And not by what we are, too apt to fall!  
 My little child—he sleeps and smiles between  
 These thoughts and me. In Heaven we shall  
 know all!

## THE WIFE'S TRAGEDY.

TAKE the diamonds from my hair!  
 Take the flowers from the urn!  
 Fling the lattice wide! more air!  
 Air—more air, or else I burn!  
 Put the bracelets by. And thrust  
 Out of sight these hated pearls.  
 I could trample them to dust,  
 Though they *were* his gift, the Earl's!  
 Flusht I am? The dance it was.  
 Only that. Now leave me, Sweet.  
 Take the flowers, girl, because  
 They will wither in this heat.

Good night, dearest ! Leave the door  
Half-way open as you go.  
—Oh, thank God ! . . . Alone once more.  
Am I dreaming ? . . . dreaming ? . . . no !  
Still that music underneath  
Works to madness in my brain.  
Even the roses seem to breathe  
Poison'd perfumes, full of pain.  
Let me think . . . my head is aching.  
I have little strength to think.  
And I know my heart is breaking.  
Yet, O love, I will not shrink !  
Ah, the night is bright and still  
Over all the fields I know :  
And the chestnuts on the hill :  
And the quiet lake below.  
By that lake I yet remember  
How, last year, we stood together  
One wild eve in warm September  
Bright with thunder : not a feather  
Stirr'd the slumbrous swans that floated  
Past the reed-beds, husht and white :  
Towers of sultry cloud hung moated  
In the lake's unshaken light :  
Far behind us all the extensive  
Woodland blacken'd against heaven :  
And we spake not :—pausing pensive :  
Till the thunder-cloud was riven,  
And the black wood whiten'd under,  
And the storm began to roll,  
And the love laid up like thunder  
Burst at once upon my soul.

Through warm widths of glowing weather,  
    Past sweet tracts of crimson light,  
Down the sunset lost together,  
    Far athwart the summer night.  
“Canst thou make such life thy choice,  
    My heart’s own, my chosen one?”  
So he whisper’d, and his voice  
    Had such magic in its tone !  
But one hour ago we parted.  
    And we meet again to-morrow.  
Parted—silent, and sad-hearted :  
    And we meet—in guilt and sorrow.  
But we *shall* meet . . . meet, O God,  
    To part never . . . the last time !  
Yes ! the Ordeal shall be trod.  
    Burning ploughshares—love and crime !  
Oh with him, with him to wander  
    Through the wide world—only his !  
Heart, and hope, and Heaven to squander  
    On the wild wealth of his kiss !

Then ? . . . like these poor flowers that wither

In my bosom, to be thrown

Lightly from him any whither

When the sweetnes all is flown !

Yes, I know it all, my fate !

But the gulf is crost for ever,

And regret is born too late.

The shut Past re-opens never.

Safe, within his smile (*his smile !*)

Smiles less kind I shall not see.

Let the whole wide world revile,

He is all the world to me.

All the world . . . Ah, me ! my child—

My own fair-hair'd, darling boy !

In his sleep just now he smiled,

Dreaming innocentest joy.

How those soft long lashes shade

That young cheek so husht and warm,

Like a half-blown rosebud laid

On the little dimpled arm !

He will wake without a mother.

He will hate me when he hears

From the cold lips of another

All my faults in after years.

None will tell the deep devotion

Wherewith I have brooded o'er

His young life, since its first motion

Made me hope and pray once more.

On my breast he smiled and slept,

Smiled between my wrongs and me,

Till the weak warm tears I wept

Set my dry, coil'd nature free.

Nay, . . . my feverish kiss would wake him.  
How can I dare bless his sleep ?  
They will change him soon, and make him  
Like themselves that never weep ;  
Fitted to the world's bad part :  
Yet, will all their wealth afford him  
Aught more rich than this lost heart  
Whose last anguish yearns toward him ?  
Ah, there's none will love him then  
As I love, that leave him now !  
He will mix with selfish men.  
Yes, he has his father's brow !  
Lie thou there, thou poor rose-blossom,  
In that little hand more light  
Than upon this restless bosom,  
Whose last gift is given to-night.  
O love ! love ! but this is bitter !  
O that we had never met !  
O but hate than love were fitter !  
And He too may hate me yet.  
Yet to him have I not given  
All life's sweetness ? . . . fame ? and name ?  
Hope ? and happiness ? and Heaven ?  
Can he hate me for my shame ?  
“Sweet in novel lands,” he said,  
“Day by day to share delight ;  
On by soft surprises led,  
And together rest at night.  
So from coast to coast we'll range,  
Growing nearer as we move  
On our charm'd way ; each soft change  
Only deepening changeless love.”

'Twas the dream which I, too, dream'd  
Once,—long since,—in days of yore.  
Life's long-faded fancies seem'd  
At his words to bloom once more.  
The old hope, the wreckt belief,  
The lost light of vanish't years,  
Ere my heart was worn with grief,  
Or my eyes were dimm'd with tears !  
When a careless girl I clung  
With proud trust to my own powers :—  
Ah, long since I, too, was young,  
I, too, dream'd of happy hours !  
Ha ! the long night wears away.  
Yon cold drowsy star grows dim.  
The long fear'd, long wisht-for, day  
Comes, when I shall fly with him.  
In the laurel wakes the thrush.  
Through these dreaming chambers wide  
Not a sound is stirring. Hush !  
—Oh, it was my child that cried !

## THE LAST REMONSTRANCE.

## I.

YES ! I am worse than thou didst once believe me.  
Worse than thou deen'st me now I cannot be—  
But say "the Fiend's no blacker," . . . canst thou  
leave me ?  
Where wilt thou flee ?

## II.

Where wilt thou bear the relics of the days  
 Squander'd round this dethronèd love of thine ?  
 Hast thou the silver and the gold to raise  
 A new god's shrine ?

## III.

Thy cheek hath lost its roundness and its bloom.  
 Who will forgive those signs where tears have fed  
 On thy once lustrous eyes,—save *he* for whom  
 Those tears were shed ?

## IV.

Know I not every grief whose course hath sown  
 Lines on thy brow, and silver in thy hair ?  
 Will new love learn the language, mine alone  
 Hath graven there ?

## V.

Despite the blemisht beauty of thy brow  
 Thou wouldest be lovely, couldst thou love again ;  
 For Love renews the Beautiful : but thou  
 Hast only pain.

## VI.

How wilt thou bear from pity to implore  
 What once those eyes from rapture could com-  
 mand ?  
 How wilt thou stretch,—who wast a Queen of yore,—  
 A suppliant's hand ?

## VII.

Even were thy heart content from love to ask  
No more than needs to keep it from the chill,  
Hast thou the strength to recommence the task  
Of pardoning still ?

## VIII.

Wilt thou to one, exacting all that I  
Have lost the right to ask for, still extend  
Forgiveness on forgiveness, with that sigh  
That dreads the end ?

## IX.

Ah, if thy heart can pardon yet, why yet  
Should not its latest pardon be for me ?  
For who will bend, the boon he seeks to get,  
On lowlier knee ?

## X.

Where wilt thou find the unworthier heart than  
mine,  
That it may be more grateful, or more lowly ?  
To whom else, pardoning much, become divine  
By pardoning wholly ?

## XI.

Hath not thy forehead paled beneath my kiss ?  
And through thy life have I not writ my name ?  
Hath not my soul sign'd thine ? . . . I gave thee bliss,  
If I gave shame :

## XII.

The shame, but not the bliss, where'er thou goest,  
 Will haunt thee yet: to me no shame thou hast:  
 To me alone, what now thou art, thou knowest  
 By what thou wast.

## XIII.

If, faring on together, I have fed  
 Thy lips on poisons, they were sweet at least:  
 Nor couldst thou thrive where holier Love hath spread  
 His simpler feast.

## XIV.

Change would be death. Could severance from my  
 side  
 Bring thee repose, I would not bid thee stay.  
 My love should meet, as mutely as my pride,  
 That parting day.

## XV.

It may not be; for thou couldst not forget me—  
 Not that my own is more than other natures,  
 But that 'tis different: and thou wouldest regret me  
 'Mid purer creatures.

## XVI.

Then, if love's first ideal now grows wan,  
 And thou wilt love again,—again love me,  
 For what I am;—no hero, but a man  
 Still loving thee.

## THE CHESS-BOARD.

DEAR little fool, do you remember,  
Ere we were grown so sadly wise,  
Those evenings in the bleak December,  
Curtain'd warm from the snowy weather,  
When you and I play'd chess together,

Checkmated by each other's eyes ?

Ah, still I see your soft white hand  
Hovering warm o'er Queen and Knight.

Brave Pawns in valiant battle stand :  
The double Castles guard the wings :  
The Bishop, bent on distant things,  
Moves, sidling, through the fight.

Our fingers touch ; our glances meet,  
And falter ; falls your golden hair

Against my cheek ; your bosom sweet  
Is heaving. Down the field, your Queen  
Rides slow her soldiery all between,

And checks me unaware.

Ah me ! the little battle's done,  
Disperst is all its chivalry ;  
Full many a move, since then, have we  
'Mid Life's perplexing chequers made,  
And many a game with Fortune play'd,—

What is it we have won ?

This, this at least—if this alone ;—  
That never, never, never more,  
As in those old still nights of yore,

(Ere we were grown so sadly wise) ·  
 Can you and I shut out the skies,  
 Shut out the world, and wintry weather,  
 And, eyes exchanging warmth with eyes,  
 Play chess, as then we play'd, together !

## RETROSPECTIONS.

## I.

To-NIGHT she will dance at the Palace,  
 With the diamonds in her hair :  
 And the Prince will praise her beauty—  
 The loveliest lady there !

## II.

But tones, at times, in the music  
 Will bring back forgotten things :  
 And her heart will fail her sometimes,  
 When her beauty is praised at the King's

## III.

There sits in his silent chamber  
 A stern and sorrowful man :  
 But a strange sweet dream comes to him,  
 While the lamp is burning wan,

## IV.

Of a sunset among the vineyards  
 In a lone and lovely land,  
 And a maiden standing near him,  
 With fresh wild-flowers in her hand.

## v.

To-night she will dance at the Palace,  
 With the diamonds in her hair :  
 And the Prince will praise her beauty-  
 The loveliest lady there !

## THY VOICE ACROSS MY SPIRIT FALLS.

THY voice across my spirit falls  
 Like some spent sea-wind through dim halls  
 Of ocean-kings, left bare and wide  
 (Green floors o'er which the sca-weed crawls !)  
 Where once, long since, in festal pride  
 Some Chief, who roved and ruled the tide,  
 Among his brethren reign'd and died.

I dare not meet thine eyes ; for so,  
 In gazing there, I seem once more  
 To lapse away through days of yore  
 To homes where laugh and song is o'er,  
 Whose inmates each went long ago—

Like some lost soul, that keeps the semblance  
 On its brow of ancient grace  
 Not all faded, wandering back  
 To silent chambers, in the track  
 Of the twilight, from the Place  
 Of retributive Remembrance.

Ah, turn aside those looks again.  
 Their light hath less of joy than pain.  
 We are not now what we were then.

## ASTARTE.

## I.

WHEN the latest strife is lost, and all is done with,  
 Ere we slumber in the spirit and the brain,  
 We drowse back, in dreams, to days that life begun  
 with,  
 And their tender light returns to us again.

## II.

I have cast away the tangle and the torment  
 Of the cords that bound my life up in a mesh :  
 And the pulse begins to throb that long lay dormant  
 'Neath their pressure ; and the old wounds bleed  
 afresh.

## III.

I am touch'd again with shades of early sadness,  
 Like the summer-cloud's light shadow in my hair :  
 I am thrill'd again with breaths of boyish gladness,  
 Like the scent of some last primrose on the air.

## IV.

And again she comes, with all her silent graces,  
 The lost woman of my youth, yet unpossest :  
 And her cold face so unlike the other faces  
 Of the women whose dead lips I since have prest.

## V.

The motion and the fragrance of her garments  
 Seem about me, all the day long, in the room :  
 And her face with its bewildering old endearments,  
 Comes at night, between the curtains, in the gloom.

## VI.

When vain dreams are stirr'd with sighing, near the morning,  
 To my own her phantom lips I feel approach :  
 And her smile, at eve, breaks o'er me without warning  
 From its speechless, pale, perpetual reproach.

## VII.

While life's dawning glimmer yet had all the tint  
 there  
 Of the orient, in the freshness of the grass,  
 (Ah what feet since then have trodden out the print  
 there !)  
 Did her soft, her silent footsteps fall, and pass :

## VIII.

They fell lightly, as the dew falls, 'mid ungather'd  
 Meadow-flowers ; and lightly linger'd with the dew.  
 But the dew is gone, the grass is dried and wither'd,  
 And the traces of those steps have faded too.

## IX.

Other footsteps fall about me—faint, uncertain,  
 In the shadow of the world, as it recedes :  
 Other forms peer through the half-uplifted curtain  
 Of that mystery which hangs behind the creeds.

## X.

What is gone is gone for ever. And new fashions  
 May replace old forms which nothing can restore :  
 But I turn from sighing back departed passions  
 With that pining at the bosom as of yore.

## XI.

I remember to have murmur'd, morn and even,  
 "Though the Earth dispart these Earthlies, face  
 from face,  
 Yet the Heavenlies shall surely join in Heaven,  
 For the spirit hath no bonds in time or space :

## XII.

"Where it listeth, there it bloweth : all existence  
 Is its region ; and it houseth, where it will.  
 I shall feel her through immeasurable distance,  
 And grow nearer, and be gather'd to her, still.

## XIII.

"If I fail to find her out by her gold tresses,  
 Brows, and breast, and lips, and language of sweet  
 strains,  
 I shall know her by the traces of dead kisses,  
 And that portion of myself which she retains."

## XIV.

But my being is confused with new experience,  
 And changed to something other than it was ;  
 And the Future with the Past is set at variance ;  
 And Life falters 'neath the burthens which it has.

## XV.

Earth's old sins press fast behind me, weakly wailing :  
Faint before me fleets the good I have not done :  
And my search for her may still be unavailing  
'Mid the spirits that are pass'd beyond the sun.

## THE NEGLECTED HEART.

THIS heart you would not have,  
I laid up in a grave  
Of song : with love enwound it ;  
And set sweet fancies blowing round it.

Then I to others gave it ;  
Because you would not have it.  
“ See you keep it well,” I said ;  
“ This heart’s sleeping—is not dead ;  
But will wake some future day :  
See you keep it while you may.”

All great Sorrows in the world,—  
Some with crowns upon their heads,  
And in regal purple furl’d ;  
Some with rosaries and beads ;  
Some with lips of scorning, curl’d  
At false Fortune ; some, in weeds  
  
Of mourning and of widowhood,  
Standing tearful and apart—

You bethought you then . . . "Ah me,  
What if this heart, I did not choose  
To retain, hath found the key  
Of the kingdom ? and I lose  
A great power ? Me he gave it :  
Mine the right, and I will have it."

Ah, too late ! For crowds exclaim'd  
"Ours it is : and hath been claim'd.  
Moreover, where it lies, the spot  
Is holy ground : so enter not.

None but men of mournful mind—  
Men to darken'd days resign'd ;  
Equal scorn of Saint and Devil ;  
Poor and outcast ; halt and blind ;  
Exiles from Life's golden revel ;  
Gnawing at the bitter rind  
Of old griefs ; or else, confined  
In proud cares, to serve and grind,—  
May enter : whom this heart shall cure.  
But go thou by : thou art not poor :  
Nor defrauded of thy lot :  
Bless thyself : but enter not !"

## APPEARANCES.

WELL, you have learn'd to smile.  
And no one looks for traces  
Of tears about your eyes.  
Your face is like most faces.  
And who will ask, meanwhile,  
If your face your heart belies ?  
Are you happy ? You look so.  
Well, I wish you what you seem.  
Happy persons sleep so light !  
In your sleep you never dream ?  
But who could care to know  
What dreams you dream'd last night ?



# **LYRICAL.**

## **PART III.**



II.

God's glory lies not out of reach.  
The moss we crush beneath our feet,  
The pebbles on the wet sea-beach,  
Have solemn meanings strange and sweet.

III.

The peasant at his cottage door  
May teach thee more than Plato knew :  
See that thou scorn him not : adore  
God in him, and thy nature too.

IV.

Know well thy friends. The woodbine's breath,  
The woolly tendril on the vine,  
Are more to thee than Cato's death,  
Or Cicero's words to Catiline.

## V.

The wild rose is thy next in blood :  
 Share Nature with her, and thy heart.  
 The kingcups are thy sisterhood :  
 Consult them duly on thine art.

## VI.

Nor cross the sea for gems. Nor seek :  
 Be sought. Fear not to dwell alone.  
 Possess thyself. Be proudly-meek.  
 See thou be worthy to be known.

## VII.

The Genius on thy daily ways  
 Shall meet, and take thee by the hand :  
 But serve him not as who obeys :  
 He is thy slave if thou command.

## VIII.

Be quiet. Take things as they come :  
 Each hour will draw out some surprise.  
 With blessing let the days go home :  
 Thou shalt have thanks from evening skies.

## IX.

Lean not on one mind constantly :  
 Lest, where one stood before, two fall.  
 Something God hath to say to thee  
 Worth hearing from the lips of all.

## X.

All things are thine estate : yet must  
 Thou first display the title-deeds,  
 And sue the world. Be strong : and trust  
 High instincts more than all the creeds.

## XI.

Assert thyself : and by-and-by  
 The world will come and lean on thee.  
 But seek not praise of men : thereby  
 Shall false shows cheat thee. Boldly be.

## XII.

Each man was worthy at the first :  
 God spake to us ere we were born :  
 But we forget. The land is curst :  
 We plant the briar, reap the thorn.

## XIII.

Remember, every soul He made  
 Is different : has some deed to do,  
 Some work to work. Be undismay'd,  
 Though thine be humble : do it too.

## XIV.

Not all the wisdom of the schools  
 Is wise for thee. Hast thou to speak ?  
 No man hath spoken for thee. Rules  
 Are well : but never fear to break

## XV.

The scaffolding of other souls :  
 It was not meant for thee to mount ;  
 Though it may serve thee. Separate wholes  
 Make up the sum of God's account :

## XVI.

Earth's number-scale is near us set ;  
 The total God alone can see ;  
 But each some fraction : shall I fret  
 If you see Four where I saw Three ?

## XVII.

A unit's loss the sum would mar ;  
 Therefore if I have One or Two,  
 I am as rich as others are,  
 And help the whole as well as you.

## XVIII.

This wild white rose-bud in my hand  
 Hath meanings meant for me alone,  
 Which no one else can understand :  
 To you it breathes with alter'd tone :

## XIX.

How shall I class its properties  
 For you ? or its wise whisperings  
 Interpret ? Other ears and eyes  
 It teaches many other things.

## XX.

We number daisies, fringe and star :  
We count the cinqfoils and the poppies :  
We know not what they mean. We are  
Degenerate copyists of copies.

## XXI.

We go to Nature, not as lords,  
But servants : and she treats us thus :  
Speaks to us with indifferent words,  
And from a distance looks at us.

## XXII.

Let us go boldly, as we ought,  
And say to her, “ We are a part  
Of that supreme original Thought  
Which did conceive thee what thou art .

## XXIII.

“ We will not have this lofty look :  
Thou shalt fall down, and recognize  
Thy kings : we will write in thy book,  
Command thee with our eyes.”

## XXIV.

Nor serve the subject overmuch :  
Nor rhythm and rhyme, nor colour and form :  
Know Truth hath all great graces, such  
As shall with these thy work inform.

**xxv.**

We ransack History's tatter'd page :  
 We prate of epoch and costume :  
 Call this, and that, the Classic Age :  
 Choose tunic now, now helm and plume :

**xxvi.**

But while we halt in weak debate  
 'Twixt that and this appropriate theme,  
 The offended wild-flowers stare and wait,  
 The bird hoots at us from the stream.

**xxvii.**

Next, as to laws. What's beautiful  
 We recognize in form and face :  
 And judge it thus, and thus, by rule,  
 As perfect law brings perfect grace :

**xxviii.**

If through the effect we drag the cause,  
 Dissect, divide, anatomize,  
 Results are lost in loathsome laws,  
 And all the ancient beauty dies :

**xxix.**

Till we, instead of bloom and light,  
 See only sinews, nerves, and veins :  
 Nor will the effect and cause unite,  
 For one is lost if one remains :

## XXX.

But from some higher point behold  
 This dense, perplexing complication ;  
 And laws involved in laws unfold,  
 And orb into thy' contemplation.

## XXXI.

God, when he made the seed, conceived  
 The flower ; and all the work of sun  
 And rain, before the stem was leaved,  
 In that prenatal thought was done :

## XXXII.

The girl who twines in her soft hair  
 The orange-flower, with love's devotion,  
 By the mere act of being fair  
 Sets countless laws of life in motion :

## XXXIII.

To thine Idea its own fate  
 Surrender : so shalt thou fulfil  
 All laws of art. Create ! create !  
 Dissection leaves the dead dead still.

## XXXIV.

Burn catalogues. Write thine own books.  
 What need to pore o'er Greece and Rome ?  
 When whoso through his own life looks  
 Shall find that he is fully come

## XXXV.

Through Greece and Rome, and Middle-Age :  
 Hath been by turns, ere yet full-grown,  
 Soldier, and Senator, and Sage,  
 And worn the tunic and the gown.

## XXXVI.

Cut the world thoroughly to the heart.  
 The sweet and bitter kernel crack.  
 Have no half-dealings with thine art.  
 All heaven is waiting : turn not back.

## XXXVII.

If all the world for thee and me  
 One, and one only, shape possess'd,  
 What shall I say ? a single tree—  
 Whereby to typify the rest,

## XXXVIII.

And I could imitate the bark  
 And foliage, both in form and hue,  
 Or silver-gray, or brown and dark,  
 Or rough with moss, or wet with dew,

## XXXIX.

But thou, with one form in thine eye,  
 Couldst penetrate all forms, possess  
 The Archetype, and multiply  
 A million like it more or less,

## XL.

Which were the Artist of us twain ?

The moral's clear to understand.

Where'er we walk, by hill or plain,

Is there no mystery on the land ?

## XLI.

O seize its import, if you can,

Which miss'd, leaves Nature's self—a clod !

For Art is Nature made by Man

To Man the interpreter of God.

## FORM.

## I.

A MAN walks through a wood

Admiring what he sees there :

How blessed if he could

Admire, and be at ease there !

But ah ! his admiration he must utilize, or doubt of it.

So he lops off a branch, resolved to fashion something  
out of it.

## II.

As though the thing were not,

Already ere he take it,

A something more than what

His utmost means can make it !

He knows not what he wants to make : this only  
who shall gainsay ?

Something he MUST make out of it, since man's a  
maker, men say.

## III.

He chisels, chips, and chops,  
And carves, as he is able :  
Now plans a chair, now stops  
And meditates a table.

At length, grown somewhat weary, in the midst of  
all his toils, it  
Strikes him that, the more he chips and chops, the  
more he spoils it.

## IV.

He pauses ; wipes the sweat,  
Discouraged, from his forehead ;  
Casts down his eyes ; and yet  
The failure seems more horrid.

But lo you ! in his workshop, having sidled through  
the door there,  
A little child is playing with the shavings on the  
floor there.

## V.

And, as they fall self-roll'd,  
Each wooden ringlet nearing,  
The child hath made, behold !  
Out of each a pretty earring.

Friend, that child, to finest uses fitting chances, must  
appal you,  
Turning accident to ornament,—your rubbish to his  
value.

## VI.

So we mend God's making,  
And so mar it for the most part :  
So chance-comers, taking  
From the dust what seem'd the lost part

Of our labour, suffer Fancy to sport with it : and the  
Muses,  
That neglected our endeavour, turn its failure to our  
uses.

### METHOD.

NATURE, that will not be commanded, never  
To arbitrary method hath submitted :  
And Time, that tends on Nature, men not ever  
Have into limitary system fitted.  
We call a year a year, and bid it cover  
Three hundred, five, and sixty days. Who'll trust it ?  
Mere fiction ! Since a fraction still stays over,  
And we, to keep our plan, must readjust it.  
Even if, within the hundredth of a minute,  
We could approach precision, that small fraction  
Would still bear our discomfiture within it,  
And doom our nicest system to distraction.  
Then let us follow Nature, glad and fleeting ;  
Since her free footstep not our best trap catches ;  
Content to time her progress by the beating  
Of her deep bosom, not of our wise watches.

### DROPPINGS.

THE leaves that fall on the grassy wall,  
And the rain dropping out of the apple tree !  
And is it only a passing dream ?  
For, I know not why, but these things seem  
Just now worth more than the world to me.

Fast the leaves fall on the grassy wall ;  
 Fast drops the rain from the apple tree ;  
 And, if I could feel what I feel now  
 But a moment longer, I think I should know  
 More than ever was known, or known will be.

Wherefore ? Leaves fall all day on the wall,  
 All day drops rain from the apple tree.  
 But never before did the leaves and the rain,  
 And they doubtless will never, never again,  
 Seem about to impart such a secret to me.

Mere leaves that fall on yonder wall !  
 Mere rain dropping down out of yonder tree !  
 What matter ? If Nature has something to say,  
 Let her take her own time, let her choose her own  
 way,  
 So long as at last she will say it to me.

Ah ! but leaves will fall, as now, on the wall,  
 And rain, as now, drop from out of the tree,  
 Many, many a day, while the chance, I know,  
 Is lost ! I have miss'd what, a moment ago,  
 The leaves and the rain had confided to me.

### ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ.

WELL and good is the doctrine of "Know thyself,"  
 And let him obey it, that can, to the letter ;  
 Self-ignorance being the veriest fetter  
 That ever kept fools in the stocks, no doubt.

But, while the Greek sages lie there on my shelf,  
Why should I scruple to speak my mind out,  
And assert that 'Forget thyself' is a better?  
Self-unconsciousness being, perchance,  
The one thing free from self-ignorance.  
Not by looking within, but by living without,  
This centre of self, shall a man grow wise.  
Let us, leaving ourselves, then, go boldly about,  
And take part in the business of earth and skies :  
For only by knowledge of that which is not  
Thyself shall thyself be learn'd, I wot.  
Woe to the nation, and woe to the age, and woe,  
                to the man  
That live not outside of themselves ! To them dis-  
solution is near.  
Healthful and happy are they that, promoting the  
                infinite plan,  
Are moved with the movement of things, and have  
                joy in the general cheer.

## PUBLIC OPINION.

If Conscience be sole regent of man's soul,  
Whose thoughts and will are but her ministers,  
Needs must she disallow the enforced control  
Of thoughts she thinks not, and of wills not hers.  
This Soul-made Conscience is a Queen, whose cold  
Strict sceptre rules her hidden realm, alone ;

That Crowd-made Conscience is a 'harlot bold,  
That's own'd by many, yet is no man's own :  
This Conscience is responsible for one ;  
That Conscience irresponsible for any :  
Wrong done by all men is the deed of none ;  
That's no man's virtue which is made by many :  
Since, therefore, God no Corporate Soul hath made,  
How shall this Corporate Conscience be obey'd ?

### INTELLECTUAL ISOLATION.

If that, in passing on thy way, thou find  
Thy boisterous fellow-traveller, the Age,  
Doth vex thee, or neglect thee, O my mind,  
Take comfort, and this fact (that shall assuage  
Resentment, and confirm thy patience) know :—  
This Age is surely passing under ground.  
But, issuing forth of other ages, thou  
Art unto other ages forward bound.

### ICH DIEN.

THE proudest knighthood of Christendom once  
(Of its Lord and Master observant)  
Wrote "*I serve*" on its shield. That was ages back :  
But the world has moved forward : and my man Jack  
Is offended now if I, for the nonce,  
Should venture to call him a servant.

## THE WORLD'S REVENGE.

AGNES, with the ethereal face  
Where Perugino's pathos vies  
With mild Correggio's mystic grace  
About her soft celestial eyes,  
If you talk to her of a husband, sighs,  
And shakes her head with a fine disdain.  
A maid she is, and will ever remain,  
Lest, alas ! in this valley of vanities  
Her pure ideal should suffer a stain.  
For love is holy, but men are base,  
And she scorns to submit to the common case,  
Agnes with the ethereal face.

Young Hotspur, he of the fiery soul,  
Will be Cæsar or nothing, if I am a seer.  
His passionate spirit spurns control.  
For a patriot he, and of pride severe,  
Which pelf can pay not, nor promise cajole,  
Whose haughty heart holds far too dear  
The right of its glorious discontent,  
To part (whatever the chance, I fear)  
With that noble privilege, sole and whole,  
For an office, a gift of the government.  
Oh, to be a salaried servant, a mere  
Paid drudge, no matter how eminent,  
In the public mill! . . . to his friends 'tis clear

Natures like his were never meant  
For the vulgar go-cart's dull career.  
No ! man delights not him, be sure,  
—Nor woman either, "though by your smiling  
You seem to think so." Beauty's lure  
By him is scorn'd, with Power's beguiling.

And so Hotspur no more takes a place, nor a post,  
Than Agnes a husband, whatever the cost.

O Agnes of the ethereal face,  
Perugino brow, and Correggio eyes !  
O Hotspur, you of the fiery spirit !  
What meanwhile says the world of your noble case ?  
'Tis as old, at least, as the earth and skies.  
Though that takes nothing away from your merit.  
But men and women grow old, alas !  
And this is a woeful world, by the mass !  
That seizes the near gain, not seeing the far gain.  
Oh, what if this wonder should come to pass—  
That you, fair Sister, and you, brave Brother,  
Who will take nothing now, you generous two,  
Though the world itself we offer'd you,  
Should end at last by taking each other,  
And what else may be got for it, into the bargain ?

## TO A WOMAN.

SINCE all that I can ever do for thee  
Is to do nothing, may'st thou never see,  
Never divine, the all that nothing costeth me !

## RELATIVE VALUES.

WHAT ! all Life's waking years vouchsafed for Death's  
one moment's sleep ?  
Death being the sole price of life, methinks the cost  
is cheap.  
But ah ! Death's little moment, bought by many and  
many a year  
Of Life, . . . for this, to me it seems, the price is some-  
what dear.

## ARISTOCRACY.

To thee be all men heroes : every race  
Noble : all women virgins : and each place  
A temple. Know thou nothing that is base.

## KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.

MEASURE thy knowledge by the weight of it,  
Which is a kind of sorrowfulness. Men  
Dig deep, get gold, and judge its value then,  
According as the heaviness be great of it.

But love thy wisdom for the lightness of it.  
Glad wisdom is not gotten, but is given :  
Not dug out of the earth, but dropp'd from Heaven :  
Heavenly, not earthly, is the brightness of it.

## “THE PITY OF IT.”

PITY to man so human is, we say  
“The pitiless man’s most pitiable.” Nay,  
Man is, at bottom, such a pitiful elf  
That, when he doth his pitying  
Deny to every other thing,  
He pitieh yet himself.

Older than man, and wiser too,  
Dame Nature doeth what to do  
God gave her, with nor tear nor sigh.  
She sees with an unpiteous eye  
The multitudes be born and die,  
And all things pass unto the place  
Appointed them in time and space.

Loss doth not vex, nor pain deter,  
 Nor failure fret, nor trouble stir,  
 Nor self-compassion vanquish her.  
 How free from love, how free from hate,  
 How careless yet how accurate,  
 Admitting neither more nor less,  
 She looks with unashamed face  
 On her own work, and doth possess,  
 Firm from the summit to the base,  
 Her calm hereditary place  
 'Twixt stars and graves; most pitiless,  
 Most positive.

And therefore man,  
 Whose course hath stray'd since it began  
 In searching after happiness,  
 For all his vaunting, never can  
 Support unpain'd the cruel stress  
 Of her immense contentedness.

"Stay!" here my Stoic cries, "I too,  
 Who suffer not the sense of pain,  
 By sense of pity, to subdue  
 My lordom o'er this puling train  
 Of passions pent in heart and brain,  
 From an unshaken centre view  
 The rolling world."

Suppose you do,  
 Good friend, and what is all your gain?  
 And what, when all is gain'd, are you?  
 Not more a god, nor less a brute,

I ween, than all the others are,  
 For having made life's organ mute  
 Because you found the music jar :  
 A brute, I say, no whit less real  
 Though brutalized by an ideal.

Whence I deduce, howe'er you frown,  
 The weakness of this human creature :  
 Since pity is, indeed, the crown,  
 The grace and glory of its nature,  
 Whose very strength most dwells in this ;  
 —Yet pity's self a weakness is.

### SIDE BY SIDE.

(FRIEND AND FRIEND.)

MAY we, then, never know each other ?  
 Who love each other more, I dare  
 Affirm for both, than brother brother,  
 Ay ! more, my friend, than they that are  
 The children of one mother.

A look—and lo, our natures meet !  
 A word—our minds make one reply !  
 A touch—our hearts have but one beat !  
 And, if we walk together—why  
 The same thought guides our feet

The self-same course ! The flower that blows  
 A scent unguess'd in hedgerow green,

Slim spiders, where the water throws,  
The starry-weeded stones between,  
Strange light that flits and flows,

Were charged by some sweet spirit, sure,  
(Love's minister, and ours !) to strike  
Our sense with one same joy, allure  
Our hearts, and bless us both alike  
With memories that endure.

True friend ! I know you : and I know  
You know me too. And this is well.  
Yet something seems to lie below  
All knowledge, which is hard to tell.  
The world, where hands let go,

Slips in between. The warmth yet stays  
Where, twelve safe hours ago, no more  
Your soul touch'd mine. But days and days  
Make callous what one day leaves sore,  
Ichoring the wound they graze.

Not ours the change, if change must fall,  
Nor yours the fault, nor mine, my friend !  
Life's love will last : but not love's small  
Sweet hourly lives. That these should end  
It grieves me. That is all.

This is time's curse. Since life began  
It hath been losing love too fast.  
And I would keep, while yet I can,  
Man's faith in love, lest at the last  
I lose love's faith in man.

But something sighs, "Be satisfied.  
 Ye know no more than ye can know."  
 And walking, talking, side by side,  
 It sometimes seems to me as though  
 Love did to love provide

(How shall I say ?) a man, in fine,  
 A ghostly Third,—who is, indeed,  
 Not you nor I, though yours and mine ;  
 The creature of our mutual need,  
 The friend for whom we pine.

You call him Me : I call him You :  
 Who is not either you nor I :  
 This phantom friend, whom we pursue,  
 Released by Love's fine alchemy,  
 Mere product of us two !

The man that each in each hath sought,  
 And each within himself hath found :  
 The being of our separate thought,  
 To each by his own nature bound,  
 From his own nature wrought.

Heed well our friend, while yet we may !  
 There are so many winds about,  
 And any wind may blow away  
 Love's airy child. O never doubt  
 He is the common prey

Of every chance, while love remains :  
 And every chance which he survives

Is something added to love's gains.  
 Comfort our friend whilst yet he lives !  
 Dead, what shall pay our pains ?

If cold should kill his heart at last,  
 Regret will idly muse, and think  
 In at what window blew the blast ?  
 Or how we might have stopp'd that chink.  
 What mends a moment past ?

## (MAN AND WIFE.)

Nay, Sweet ! no thought, not any thought,  
 At least not any thought of you,  
 But what must thank dear love. Nor aught  
 Of love's mistrust between us two  
 Can ever creep. Thank God, we keep  
 Too close to let thin doubts slip through,

And leave a scar where they divide  
 Hearts meant by Heaven to hold together.  
 So, soul by soul, as side by side,  
 We sit. Thought wanders hither, thither,  
 From star to star, yet not so far  
 But what, at end of all its tether,

It feels the beating of your heart,  
 To which mine bound it long ago.  
 Our love is perfect, every part.  
 Love's utmost reach'd at last, must so  
 Henceforth abide. And, if I sigh'd  
 Just now, I scarcely wish to know

The reason why. Who feels love's best,  
 Must feel love's best can be no more.  
 We see the bound, no longer guess'd,  
 But fix'd for ever. Lo, the shore !  
 On either hand, 'twixt sea and land,  
 How clear and fine does sight explore  
 That long-drawn self-determined line  
 Of difference traced ! My Own, forgive  
 That, sitting thus, your hand in mine,  
 Glad that dear God doth let us live  
 So close, my Own, so almost one,  
 A thought that wrongs repose should strive  
 With pure content. So much we are,  
 Who are no more . . . could I explain !  
 Ah, the calm sea-coast ! Think, how far  
 Across the world came land and main,  
 Endeavouring each to find and reach  
 The other,—well, and they attain  
 Here ! And just here, where they unite,  
 The point of contact seems to be  
 The point of severance. Left and right,  
 Here lies the land and there the sea.  
 They meet from far : they touch : yet are  
 Still one and one eternally,  
 With still that touch between—that touch  
 That joins and yet divides—the shore.  
 Oh soul to soul, dear love, 'tis much !  
 Love's utmost gain'd can give no more.  
 And yet . . . Well, no ! 'tis better so.  
 Earth still (be glad !) holds Heaven in store.

## CYNIPS TERMINALIS.

*(A Colloquy.)*

NATURALIST.

THERE is a little fly, I know  
As one of Nature's tiniest creatures ;  
So small, you'd scarce perceive her, though  
You search'd all day to find her features

About a certain small green plant,  
In corners of the young leaves curl'd ;—  
A weed so insignificant  
It counts for nothing in the world.

This lady-fly is framed so frail,  
The great world holds but that one weed  
Her utmost strength can just avail  
To pierce, wherein her eggs may breed.

And that one plant comes forth, and flowers,  
And falls, so fast, the whole year round  
Holds only some few short Spring hours  
Wherein his leaves so fine are found,

That their minute inhabitant,  
My lady-fly, has strength enough  
Her tiny eggs to sheathe and plant  
Within their softly-woven stuff.

Yet millions of this fly minute  
Spring sprinkles round my idle walk ;  
So many, I may not compute  
Their numbers on a single stalk :

And all their business here on earth  
 Is in those few short hours contain'd ;  
 And generations (death or birth !)  
 Depend on one occasion gain'd

Or lost in that eternal scramble  
 For leave to live, that ceases not :—  
 Just so much time as in my ramble  
 I squander, while the noon is hot,

With no more heed than how to lose  
 The unprofitable consciousness  
 Of what I scarcely care to use,  
 It seems so short,—an hour, or less !

How wary in the midst of all  
 Her wondrous toils must Nature be,  
 To calculate mischance, forestall  
 The coming hour, and strictly see

That this small fly and that small weed  
 Find out each other, just in time  
 To consummate their ends ! Indeed  
 Among the starry spheres sublime,

Or 'mid the planets poised aloft,  
 Or in the suns beyond the sun,  
 I marvel if she be not oft  
 Half moved in mind to leave undone

These tiny tasks, that claim so much  
 Forethoughted care, such arduous ways,  
 Such thrift of time, and render such  
 Small recompence of human praise,

Rather than, in yon starry dome,  
 Whilst kindling kingly orbs to be,  
 Break off to meet the claims of some  
 Poor hundred lepidopteræ,

Or frolic infusoria  
 That, sporting in the stagnant tank,  
 Suspend not even a moment's play  
 Her unabated care to thank.

For who on earth would mark or miss  
 A million Cynips less or more?  
 Who, if next year the whole race is  
 Extinguish'd quite, will much deplore?

Yet year by year, 'mid summer's sounds  
 And scents, when earth her song resumes,  
 To find the plant the fly abounds,  
 To meet the fly the plant reblooms.

## PESSIMIST.

Your Cynips fares (if this be true),  
 Whom Nature leaves not in the lurch,  
 Better, methinks, than I and you,  
 Who, though we lengthen out our search

As many years as moments she,  
 Yet miss, perchance, the one great hour,  
 And miss the means, whate'er they be,  
 To make that ours. The fly, the flower,

They need, and find each other out :  
 To these earth's want Heaven's warrant gives :  
 We in our shadows grope about  
 To seek the substance of our lives.

How many Romeos roam in vain  
 To reach the Juliet they should find,  
 Till passion, fret by frustrate pain,  
 Puts up, perforce, with Rosalind !

## NATURALIST.

Nay, friend, the Juliets such men miss,  
 If they like Rosalinds appear,  
 Perchance, methinks might answer this :  
*'The real Romeo is not here.'*

## PESSIMIST.

Admitted. But admit, both ways,  
 The same result in man and fly.  
 The Cynips that survives we praise,  
 We do not notice those that die.

On both great Nature hath her way,  
 And works her will in strong or weak.  
 'Tis Nature that succeeds, not they,—  
 That miss, or find, the thing they seek.

And could we gaze upon ourselves  
 In aggregates as vast as these  
 Not parcell'd out by tens and twelves,  
 The some few men that each man sees),

Perchance we should not notice then  
 The failure and the pain of life :  
 For man, as man, succeeds, though men  
 Drop daily in man's age-long strife.

What profits if the one that fails  
 To know the many may succeed,—  
 Nay, that his special loss avails  
 By far-off ways the general deed ?

What cares the single leaf that, sere  
 And fallen, lies a cancell'd thing,  
 To learn that all the woods next year  
 Will be renew'd with leaves in spring ?

If we, as some folks hold belief,  
 Be but as waves upon a sea,  
 Or corals in a coral reef,  
 Merged in the mass howe'er we be,

The individual life not less  
 Exacts an individual gain,  
 And feels but in the common stress  
 An individual joy or pain.

## OPTIMIST.

You may be right, you may be wrong :  
 But, in a circle still revolving,  
 To me it seems you each prolong  
 A question there's no hope of solving.

In any case, we three are not  
 The first to start it. There's a story  
 Which into this good world hath got  
 I know not how. A peasant hoary,  
 Once sitting by the hostel fire,  
 Across the tankards told it me :  
 The old man had it from his sire,  
 And from the village Parson he.

Saint Peter (who of all the saints, you  
 Know, loves best to loose and bind)  
 Upon a day, this tale acquaints you,  
 Had strange misgivings in his mind.

Things might, it seem'd, be better order'd  
 On earth, where wrong is always sprouting.  
 (And, once the verge of doubt is border'd,  
 There is, you know, no end to doubting.)

Reform in most, if not in all,  
 Departments of the Administration  
 Of Matters Mundane seem'd to call  
 At least for prompt consideration.

So spake the Saint. The Lord replied,  
 " How wondrous wisely every novice  
 Can talk of things he never tried !  
 Opinions change when once in office.

To-morrow thou shalt have in charge  
 —Not all the world and Human Nature,  
 (No need at first of field so large,)  
 But simply one small living creature.

To one mere life of my creation,  
 My Servant, for one day devote  
 Thy genius for administration.  
 Be Providence to yonder goat."

The Saint, next morn, the mandate praising,  
 Sits down upon the mountain-tops,  
 And kindly eyes the creature grazing.  
 The goat the mountain-grasses crops :

Anon, a greener tuft entices  
His hungry eye, and straight he leaps  
Across the dizzy precipices,  
And 'lights upon the hither steeps.

The Saint alarm'd, with deep emotion,  
Leaps after, lest some harm befall  
His charge : meanwhile, without a notion  
That any harm's to fear at all,

The goat his new meal idly munches,  
Nor bleats a Thank-you for the dainty ;  
Then turns to browse the red ash-bunches  
His Providence provides in plenty.

But every goat objects to sameness,  
And peaceful plenty cloys at last :  
Without adventure ease is tameness :  
Away the wild thing scampers fast :

He scrambles up the pebbly passes :  
He leaps the wild ravines : in vain  
To woo him wave the choicest grasses :  
He nibbles, and is off again :

The Saint, though somewhat sorely winded,  
Runs, climbs, or crawls, as best he may,  
With anxious heart, and fearful-minded :  
The goat, ungrateful, darts away :

The good Saint Peter, puffing, blowing,  
All out of breath behind him follows :  
At noon the sun is fiercely glowing :  
The creature will not keep the hollows.

At length, his hands in anguish clasping,  
 O'ercome with toil and consternation,  
 The Saint sinks down, and, fairly gasping,  
 Resigns the Goat-administration.

"Take back, O Lord, this wilful creature,  
 And from its whimsies set me free.  
 I abdicate my usurpature,  
 And own the task's too much for me!"

Well, in our world of men of letters,  
 Who all talk finer than they think,  
 What, if my peasant's learnèd betters,  
 Who praise the Lord with pen and ink,  
 Denounce his well-meant homely fable?  
 Sweet root hath sometimes roughest stalk.  
 Thy health, old friend, across the table!  
 Thy thoughts were finer than thy talk.

In that rude garb the poor man gave it,  
 I tell the tale the poor man told,  
 Revering, what from blame may save it,  
 The reverent thought the rude words hold.

### WALKING TO THE TOWN.

As I walk to the Town  
 Now the hedges are blown,  
 And the white-thorn is thick on the air,  
 And young butterflies hoist  
 Milk-white sails from the moist  
 Open-mouth'd buttercups here and there,

While the high-shoulder'd grig,  
Whose great heart is too big  
For his body this blue May morn,  
Screams out of the spikes  
Of the grass, as he strikes  
At the stalks of the emerald corn,—

I say, as I walk  
To the Town, and talk  
To myself, with, now and then,  
A good word as I go  
To the flowers that I know,  
And now to the women and men,  
(For the waggoner plods  
By his team, and nods,  
And the girl tripping over the stile,  
Laughing shy, turning back  
On the lone meadow track,  
Leaves the sweet air more sweet for her smile,)

How little I care,  
While the weather holds fair,  
What Europe may do with To-day !  
If 'tis war be the chance,  
Or the sphynx that's in France,  
For once let the chance slip away.

Let the merchants be stirr'd  
By the ghost of a word  
Dropt in Paris, and caught up elsewhere,  
Or a manikin Duke  
Laugh to scorn the rebuke  
Of the Berlin grandes, . . . need I care ?

But how much shall I care  
If some cloud unaware  
(And the sky is not cloudless all)  
Should ruin and stain  
With one smear of blue rain  
Those meads basking under the wall !

How much if, alas !  
In the field yet to pass  
The wind should blow round to the south,  
And so blow away  
The tost balm of the hay  
From my forehead, and eyes, and mouth !

Oh, your great folks grow gray  
Making plans every way  
Man's bliss to contrive and devise,  
While your small folks, that live  
As they can, still contrive  
To be happy, you see, by surprise.

With my whole heart and strength  
I am glad that at length  
Yon primrose her green sheath has riven,  
Though I stirr'd not, you see,  
Hand or foot to set free  
The good gift, which I take as 'tis given.

Will you be at heart  
Half as glad, for your part,  
You, the wise ones, so busy to-day,  
For the labour'd success  
Of those schemes you distress  
All your souls so to bring into play ?

## A NEW YEAR'S WISH.

GIVE me this year what's good for me,  
Dear God, and chiefly give to see

That all Thou givest is good.

Let me not be afraid of life,  
Nor yet too eager for its strife,

But keep an even mood :

Content to take, and to forego :

Ready to do what is to do :

Willing to wait as well :

Glad to begin, whatever way

I must begin it, each good day

That comes with news to tell

Of Thee to me, and sure each night  
That I have understood aright

The meaning of each day :

Glad of the glorious gift of eyes :

And loving all the love that lies

About the world alway :

So that the soft sunbeams and showers,  
The little leaves and the pure flowers,

And all sweet things that be

In wholesome-minded Nature, still

May help my will to do Thy will,

Nor be ashamed of me.

There's not a cowslip coming up,

Nor any unborn buttercup

In the cold meadow grass,

But what already I am fain  
To thank Thee for each drop of rain  
That brings such things to pass.

So give me what is good for me  
This year, dear God, but most to see  
That all Thou givest is good.  
Because I know there is no duty  
Nobler than to believe in Beauty  
And nurse a thankful mood.

### HOME RE-VISITED.

OLD trusty trees, whose shade is o'er  
The fields which first my footsteps knew,  
Once more, and yet unchanged once more,  
I reach my rest, and you !

I pluck the flowers I pluck'd of old ;  
The cowslips claim their early friend ;  
About my feet, yet fresh and cold,  
The buttercups do bend ;

The selfsame buttercups they seem,  
Thick in the bright-eyed green, and such  
As when to me their blissful gleam  
Was all earth's gold,—how much !

By every well-known dim recess  
Of lawn or lane my paths at last,  
In places fill'd with pleasantness,  
Are peaceful as the past.

Old happy halls o'er yonder hill,  
That roof the rippling woods, demure  
As good old age ye smile, how still !  
How still, and how secure !

Among your immemorial groves  
Whose rustling murmur round you blows,  
And by the ways the violet loves,  
Or where the pale primrose

Lights all the lanes with her wild eyes,  
I wander on, while memory leads,  
Lull'd by the sound of sultry flies  
That swarm the simmering meads.

Where Memory leads I wander on,  
Vague as the uncertain moth that sails  
Down floating scents where most the sun  
Is sweet in violet vales.

O violet vales, whose smile I view  
Through leafy-latticed glades serene,  
Your balmy breath doth half renew  
The soul of what hath been !

O blissful time, if time would stay  
Where time awhile admits repose !  
O happy fields ! and happiest they  
Whose world no further goes !

How sweet it were, eluding life,  
Here in the haunts where life began,  
To live the death of that dull strife  
That wastes the worth in man !

To grow familiar, hour by hour,  
 With nature, and that sweeter self,  
 Knowledge of which is more than power  
 Of place, and hoarded pelf !

How impudent, how false, appears  
 This beggar world, too poor to pay  
 (Though hankering after all our years)  
 The value of a day !

A day, at least, like this, of those  
 That rarely dawn 'twixt birth and death,  
 Peaceful as death's supreme repose,  
 And pure as new-born breath.

Like that spent giant, in the tale  
 The fabling Grecian Fancy told,  
 Who felt his Earthborn forces fail  
 (Sweet mythos, never old !)

When he no more might touch the ground  
 That gave him birth, so seems in me  
 The heart of youth this day hath found  
 Refresh'd and fed by thee,

Dear native soil ! dear land of home,  
 Thrice dearer for those distant days  
 In lands my feet have learn'd to roam  
 By lone and unloved ways !

How calm about the towers of heaven  
 Yon white cloud sleeps ! how lightly thro'  
 The glad green leaves the warm air driven  
 Lets in the breezy blue !

Men strive and strive for distant things :  
 Full many seek, and few attain :  
 Care grieves about the crowns of kings,  
 And purple scotches not pain.

But why should souls despair of bliss,  
 Or pine by hungry passions torn,  
 Who only would possess what is,  
 And be what they were born ?

### THE SEPARATION OF SOULS.

I HAVE dream'd of a mountain out of sight,  
 And a fountain under the sea :  
 And this, if I interpret aright,  
 The meaning thereof must be.

Whenever the male monarch mountain  
 (Out-topping the tempest now,  
 In a mantle of mist,  
 With a girdle of snow,  
 And a corselet of amethyst)  
 May lie and be loved in the lap of the fountain  
 That doth under the hoary ocean flow  
 All in a wonderment whist,  
 —Where the sleepy sea-flowers blow  
 About on the brine, as they list,  
 With a tremulous to and fro,  
 And the silvery sea-snakes twist,

LYRICAL.

Untwist, and sail onward slow,  
Like stars that the winds have kist,  
In a rainy night, to a fitful light,  
When the vapours sweep and throw  
Soft shades where the moon is miss'd,—  
Even then, and even so,  
Spirit, dear Spirit of my deep dream,  
Whose influence sweet in the soul of me  
Is as one gleam of that mountain may seem  
To that fountain flowing under the sea,—  
Even then, even so, may we mingle, we two,  
Mingle at last, and be one, as of yore  
We were ere we were born, I know—  
Mingle at last, and be one once more  
As we were born to become, I and thou.  
Ah, but it will not be now !

My dream is troubled. Men cry  
Here and there, undiscerning.  
The busy world goes by,  
Each kind after his kind.  
Thou seemest un-moved : but I !  
I am waved as a flame in the burning  
Floated vague on a viewless wind.  
Days flit, they fly from under mine eye,  
And the years roll on unreturning,  
Leaving behind in the hollow mind  
Only an infinite yearning.  
From his lair in the cloud and snow  
The mountain is not stirr'd  
When the wild-hair'd winds do blow,  
And the trumpet of thunder is heard :

But the fountain that floweth below  
Where the flocks of the ocean herd,  
It seeketh a rest which it findeth never ;  
With a tender trouble it trembleth ever ;  
For it feeleth an ancient shock  
(Or in still or in stormy weather)  
Of the Hand that upheaved the high dry rock  
In the heaping of floods together.  
I see thee, and sing to thee,  
Seek thee,—would cling to thee,  
Clasp thee, and kiss thee,—  
Yet mourn thee and miss thee,  
Borne on from thee, whither ? ah, whither ?  
Then all comes round again,  
Renewing the ancient pain.  
One moment of light on the main,  
And at intervals the violet walls  
Of the skyey hill hang plain  
On a mirror unmarr'd by a stain.  
Thy smile is on me,—'tis in vain !

The months they come and go ;  
They take the white May flower,  
The red October fruit ;  
They drop the dismal snow,  
They drive the ghostly shower  
That passes like a sorrow  
When all is chill and mute  
Along the empty night ;  
And in some sunless morrow  
Earth lies dead and white.  
We say . . . ' The end is come !

Will the wave flow again ?  
The red rose blow again ?  
Green grass will spring no more,  
The intense lark sing no more,  
The mountain's smile is o'er,  
The fountain's lip is dumb.'  
But the months, they go and come ;  
They bring the white May flower,  
The red October fruit ;  
They drive the wan snow home ;  
They chase the sobbing shower  
Like a worn-out sorrow,  
While young leaves do shoot,  
Along the mellowing night,  
And on some sunny morrow  
Earth is laughing bright.  
We say . . . ' No end can be !  
The wave must flow once more,  
The red rose blow once more ;  
Green grass will spring again,  
The intense lark sing again ;  
The mountain laughs over the plain,  
The fountain leaps under the sea.  
Ah, the ever-recurring strain !  
What art thou to me ?  
Or what am I to thee ?  
Since ever between us twain  
Is the earth, and the sky and the sea.  
Enough of passion, enough of pain !  
Surely some end I should see,  
Be it loss or gain . . . alas, in vain !

Ever there comes the self-same train.  
What hath been still must be.  
Tost from December to June,  
Some rest the spirit craves !  
Worms eating their own cocoon,  
We toil out of our graves.  
Morn melts, and, lightly strewn  
With drops of brilliance, paves  
The track of the triumphing noon :  
Aproditè walks over the waves :  
Whom to follow, the sea-folk soon  
Float out of their foam-fed caves :  
The mountains wax merry and boon :  
Thick under the grape and blossom,  
The maidens that dance to a milk-white moon  
With young Bacchus and old Silenus,  
Sing all together a wondrous tune,  
Singing all at once, till the cymbals swoon,  
And the ocean hums, whose heaving bosom  
Is blue as the veins of Venus :  
So all day long 'twixt the sky and the sea  
The merry mad music is flowing,  
As though out of ourselves to wean us.  
But dreamest thou ever a dream of me ?  
Ever, dear Spirit, a dream of me ?  
For the world, it is coming, the world it is going,  
But the world is ever between us.

Thou standest so far above :  
I pine from so far beneath ;  
Wide is the world, but narrow my range :

And the wide world's self, I know, must change,  
—All is to pass through, all is to prove,  
The patience of life, and the impulse of death,  
Ere love be made perfect in love.  
Then, what heights unexplored in thee !  
What depths undivined in me !  
What vague half-powers  
In these souls of ours,  
Combined and completed to be !  
What knowledge to know !  
What treasures to show !  
What secrets seal'd in the sea !  
What songs of deliverance, sung  
By the stars of the morning, among  
The dells of the golden snow,  
When they dance and disport themselves, set free  
Of the world's wide witness below !  
Ah me, but to dream of it now !

I sigh for the sunrise :  
I sigh for the sunsetting :  
When, all 'twixt seas and skies,  
Rare ardours and lights devise  
A rich life of their own begetting,  
And Earth in a moment of wonder lies  
Mild-hearted, free from fretting.  
The hour of the dewy light !  
The hour of the crimson close !  
When the heart is husht, and the heaven is bright,  
With expectation keen, or throned rich repose !  
After the thunder-stain,  
Sometimes a sudden gleam

Of glory on mountain and main !  
After spent storm and rain,  
Sometimes a solemn stream  
Of sound, a single strain  
(So sweet, can I deem it is only a dream?)  
Of Seraphim, on breaths of balm  
Breathed out of a heaven cleansed and calm ;—  
One note of the angels' psalm !  
One gust of the Paradise palm !  
It sounds so near, so plain,  
I see, I hear, so distinct,  
I seem so sure to attain  
Something ! the shining chain  
'Twixt soul and soul shows linkt  
By touches bland of an angel band  
With links of light succinct !  
We have only to stretch out the hand  
And make sure of the golden gain—  
—Only to will and command.  
No ! it is sunder'd again !

Yet 'tis much, whatever the chance,  
To have felt aware that such things are,  
Though reveal'd alone by a touch, a tone,  
And gone with a passing glance.  
Moments of recompense  
Are not wholly wanting :  
Gleams of intuition :  
Thrills of joy intense,  
That pacify long panting :  
Foretastes of fruition.  
For sometimes the wind drops :

Sometimes, all between  
The motionless mountain-tops  
There is not a cloud to be seen :  
Sometimes the sea stops  
His moaning submarine.  
Then there falleth a pause :  
Then the far stands near :  
A silent sunlight draws  
From the calmèd atmosphere  
Veil after veil of a golden gauze :  
And, suddenly shining clear,  
The highest heights of the keen hills be,  
And the deepest depths of the lucid sea,  
And the nests that the eagles rear,  
And the whelmèd isles where in glee  
The starfish plants his spear,  
And each leaf on the lonesome tree  
In the wind-cleft mountain-pass,  
And each tenderest tuft of grass  
On the sky-claspt summits, appear  
Seen close through a crystal glass.  
Then down from the mountain-side  
The mighty Image creeps  
Over the trembling tide,  
Over the dreaming deeps,  
And in splendour still and wide  
The glorious vision sleeps.

The mountain with the ocean  
Mingles : the sea-fountain  
With a gentle motion  
Rocks the mirror'd mountain.

Both bask in a beam  
Of beauty, and dream  
Of a time, though but ill-remember'd,  
When the sea and land 'neath the solemn Hand  
Whose to-and-fro, in the ages ago,  
The land from the sea dismember'd,  
Lay as one living thing, aware of the wing  
Of the spirit above them spread  
In his purpose sublime; and again, of a time,  
Though realized but rarely,  
When, at the word of the Living Lord,  
The mighty mountain shall humble his head  
Avowing that God deals fairly,  
And the sea shall render up her dead,  
That the perfect purpose of Time may be shown,  
And the secret thoughts of all hearts known,  
When the books are open'd and read  
Before the Judge on the Great White Throne,  
Whose sentence is yet unsaid.  
Then those whom God hath mated  
Man no more shall sever.  
Then those by man disparted,  
Who long on earth have waited,  
Shall be reinstated  
Single soul'd, whole-hearted,  
In marriage fair for ever.

Then may we mingle, we two,  
Calm'd and cloth'd brightly.  
Then shall I know if my dream be true,  
And if I interpret it rightly.

## DUTY.

How like a trumpet from the sentinel  
Angel, that standeth in the morning star  
Empanoplied and plumed, as angels are  
Whom God doth charge to watch that all be well,  
Cometh to me thy call, O terrible,  
That, girt, and crown'd and sworled for Heaven's war,  
Standest supreme above the confused jar  
Of shock'd antagonisms, and the yell  
Of trampled Pain ! Thou of the solemn eyes,  
Firm-fronted Duty, on whose high command  
My heart waits awed, stretch forth thy harness'd hand,  
And with a louder summons bid arise  
My soul to battle. Hark, the muster-roll !  
Thy name is call'd. Forth, thou poor conscript soul !

## SACRIFICE.

UNTO my soul I said . . . ' Make now complete  
Thy sacrifice by silence. Undeterr'd,  
Strike down this beggar heart, that would be heard,  
And stops men's pity in the public street ;  
A mendicant for miserable meat !  
Nor pay thy vassal, Pain, with any word,  
Lest so the deed thou doest should be slurr'd  
By shameful recompense, and all unsweet.

Uncover not the faces of thy dead.  
 Slay thy condemnèd self, and hide the knife.  
 Even as kind Nature, not to grieve young life,  
 Fond verdure o'er the recent graves doth spread,  
 So hide beneath a smiling face the whole  
 Of what God sees—thy sorrow, O my soul !

## CONSOLATION.

WHEN I perceive how slight and poor appears  
 (Though with sad care and strong compulsion brought  
 Down rangèd rhymes with strenuous search of thought)  
 The express'd result of my much-musèd years ;  
 Remembering, too, from what divinest spheres  
 Stoop'd many a starry visitant, and taught  
 My spirit at her toils,—how round her wrought  
 Strong Raptures, Sorrows, Splendours rich in tears,  
 My whole heart fails me. Then an inward voice  
 Replies, ‘ Possess thyself, and be content.  
 Life's best is bound not by the utterance  
 Of any word, nor may in sound be spent,  
 To win back echoes out of hollow chance.  
 What thou hast *felt* is thine. If much, rejoice.’

## THE LAY OF THE COCK.

## I.

WHO will awaken the Lay of the Cock ?  
 Who will praise his prowess and power ?  
 Who will sing of his virtues seven ?

He that would waken Lay of the Cock,  
 Let him stand on a lofty tower,  
 All alone at the Dewy Hour,  
 And, elate in the light of the lifting heaven,  
 Smite his harp with a hand of power :  
 Let the harp be golden, the strings be seven,  
 And so let him waken the Lay of the Cock.

But who may fitly awaken that lay ?  
 Who sing unshamed of the sacred Cock ?  
 The bird of fire, the bird of Lok !  
 The friend and monitor of man ;  
 Best loved of all the feathery flock,  
 Since temples arose in Asia,  
 Or priests their holy rites began,  
 Roman, Greek, or Arabian !  
 Were I to say . . . ‘ I will waken the lay,’  
 Would not gods, and birds, and men,  
 Nod their heads at me and mock,  
 Mocking . . . ‘ This singer boasts too much’ ?  
 For he that would sing of the kingly Cock,  
 His lips should be as Memnon’s, when  
 The Orient first with holy ray  
 That rose-marble mouth did touch,  
 And so to manful music wake.  
 Yet will I, for true love’s sake,  
 (Tho’ gods, and birds, and men may mock,)  
 From song essay what true love may,  
 As though I stood on a lofty tower  
 All alone at the Dewy Hour,  
 Elate in the light of the lifting heaven,  
 Boldly to praise his prowess and power,

Boldly to sing of his virtues seven,  
And lightly awaken the Lay of the Cock.

## II.

Now that Orion is going his rounds  
And the dew is deep, and the lark asleep,  
Ere the misty Morn hath burst her bounds,  
Who is he doth lightly leap,  
Leaping forth of the drowsy tent  
O' the Night, with breastplate dew-besprent,  
And orient plumes in the Orient?

He should be known by his armour bright :  
He should be known by his stately tread :  
Who standeth now aware on the wall,  
Blowing abroad with might, with might,  
As though he were come to summons the dead,  
Once, twice, thrice, his clarion call.  
He that steppeth in armour bright,  
He that standeth aware on the wall,  
As a watchman stands on a tower'd rock,  
Blowing abroad with might, with might,  
His clearly-echoing clarion call,  
He is the scarlet-crested Cock :  
He is the lord of the Dewy Hour :  
Wakeful is he that watcheth for power :  
He wotteth of change on earth, in heaven :  
Watchful each, and watchful all,  
And watchful aye, are the Virtues Seven :  
And a watchful king is the crownèd Cock.

He waketh up in the solitude  
Of the starry dawn : he walketh forth,

Moving in most majestic mood'  
 East and west, and south and north ;  
 That, clear of eye, in a crystal sky  
 He may number over the shining brood  
 Of his seven-fold starry family,—  
 The mystic Seven, the Seven and One !  
 The brightest of all, his bride is she,  
 Whose name in heaven is Aleyon :\*  
 To her he calleth three times three  
 On brazen tromp with shrilly tone,  
 Till, all for love, in the light of day  
 She trembles, sinks, and swoons away :  
 Swoons for love in the lucid heaven,  
 And in skyey nest to ner starry flock  
 Is folded faint at the Dewy Hour :  
 She loveth her lord for his prowess and  
 power,  
 But she loveth him more for his true love given.  
 Love is the first of the Virtues Seven,  
 And a lover bold is the lordly Cock.

## III.

A lover bold ! well used to wars :  
 And therefore wise as well as bold :  
 Strong to maintain, strong to defend !  
 Which well they knew, those Flamens old,  
 That in honour did hold for his corselet of gold,  
 His stately step, and crest on end,  
 The bird beloved by lusty Mars,  
 And the well-skill'd Minerva's friend.

\* The constellation of the Pleiades was named by the Arabian astronomers "The Hen and Chickens."

Therefore they\* praised his prowess and power,  
 His skill, his prudence; gifts by Heaven  
 To mortal men in such full dower  
 But rarely given, and only given  
 To the few fine heads that haply flower  
 To favour high from the common stock :  
 Yet these be but three among virtues seven  
 Of the loving, wise, and valiant Cock.

## IV.

Experience clear, and courage high  
 Enkindle keen his kingly eye,  
 And all his acts bear dignity.  
 When he walketh under the vaulted arch  
 Where-through a mounted knight might march  
 At easy speed his pacing steed,  
 Nor bruise one plume of his helmet-crest,  
 This Cock, in the kingly-mindedness  
 Which all his royal gestes express,  
 Hath so lofty a heart in so lordly a breast  
 That, with stately stoop and swerving tread,  
 Lightly he boweth his lordly head.  
 So grand a consciousness hath he  
 Of his own inward majesty,  
 That breedeth a constant courtesy.

## V.

Hark ! it awakens . . . the Lay of the Cock !  
 Up on a great sunbeam he springeth.  
 His clashing vans he doth unlock  
 Once, twice, thrice, and makes sweet shock  
 Of all his sheeny silken plumes,

And swiftly ampler pomp assumes,  
And swiftly statelier stature gathers :

Then forth his brief bright flight he wingeth,  
Alighting aloof on the burnisht roof,  
And there, with voice sonorous, singeth  
After the fashion of his forefathers  
His ancient famous Lay of the Cock.

But first, as when in warlike Rome,  
What time, devising swiftest plan  
Wherewith to strongly subjugate  
A rebel king Barbarian,  
The conscript Senate sat sedate,  
Uprising with importance, some  
Renownèd Orator addrest  
His theme to martial argument,  
Who, pausing, took the posture best  
Befitting utterance eloquent ;  
So he, in oratoric mood,  
With finger'd foot upcurl'd in air,  
Assumes imposing attitude,  
And pauses with deliberate care.  
Then forth the grand oration, plain  
Of purpose, pealing, fills and shakes  
The startled air with sturdy strain,  
Shrill as the triple clang that wakes  
From the trump on the hill-top that tells where  
the chain  
Of brazen battle, tugged suddenly, breaks.  
And as that rauque and strident cry,  
That maketh of joy an agony,  
To stronger purpose scaleth high,

Ever with inward ecstacy  
 The eyelid film falls languidly,  
 Half closing on the enraptured eye.

## VI.

Then back to their lairs  
 Flit the pale nightmares,  
 And the phantoms that follow the night ;  
 The bats to their caves,  
 The ghosts to their graves ;  
 Demon and goblin sprite  
 To their prisons beneath ;  
 While the fleeting wreath  
 Of Sleep, its poppy balls  
 Folds, and flies,  
 Or on wakening eyes  
 In brilliant fragments falls ;  
 Hecate descends  
 To her own dark ends,  
 And after her grimly flock  
 All grisly things by Darkness given  
 To the sway of the Sunless Hour ;  
 But all that loveth the light of heaven,  
 Growing aware of his prowess and power,  
 And feeling the force of his virtues seven,  
 Doth rouse and rejoice  
 At the lusty voice  
 Of the loud world-welcomed Cock.

## VII.

Anon, the noon is high upwheel'd  
 In heaven upon his ardent car :

The stillness holds a heavy hand  
On all things : at their toil afar  
The reapers droop in oaten field :  
And the great trees, so stunn'd they are  
With sunlight, by no breezes fann'd,  
Sigh like sick giants through the land.  
But he for whom my harp I string  
(So might I half his glory share !)  
In easy state, an orient king,  
Frees all his royal heart from care ;  
And through his throng'd seraglio moves  
Amid his many queens full stately ;  
And one he seeks, and one reproves,  
But all he rules sedately.  
Where thickest strewn, most brightly twinkles  
The golden-grainèd barley  
By haunts the thoughtful housewife sprinkles  
That he may banquet early ;  
About him all his bustling wives  
He cheerly calls, and kingly  
He bids them feed, nor churlish strives  
Though all at once, or singly,  
Clucking, to their good feast they come,  
Aunts, sisters, daughters, cousins,  
Some bashful, by themselves, and some  
In noisy eager dozens,  
All clamouring for their several share  
Of his free largesse flung them,  
While he, well-pleased and debonair,  
Full stately steps among them.  
Well-skill'd in government is he :  
High-couraged, honourable,

And gentle-manner'd, as should be  
 Good kings whose thrones are stable :  
 Wise, loving, watchful as a star :  
 By lofty heart uplifted :  
 And, birds or men, on earth there are  
 Full few so nobly gifted.

## VIII.

Bring me straightway a burnish'd shield,  
 Broad argent all, and semi-lucent  
 As moonlight is, through silver dew sent,  
 Such as of old, on roaring field,  
 The mighty king Idomeneus  
 Was wont in battle fierce to wield  
 'Mid gods and men of godlike thews.  
 By mighty spirits of heroes old  
 Let the mighty shield be fitly borne :  
 And roll me hither through gates of gold  
 Some bright, new-born, amazing Morn,  
 In rubeous dyes of ripe sunrise,  
 Fire-fringèd skirts, and purple plumes,  
 Whose mingling lustres laugh to scorn  
 All labour'd twine of Tyrian looms :  
 Rob me her clouds of their richest hues,  
 Steaming splendours, golden fumes,  
 And airy flames, that interfuse  
 With sanguine stain the gorgeous grain  
 That dazzles the eagle's dauntless eye  
 With its ardent lights aurorean ;—  
 Orient, amber, emerald, wan  
 Fleeting sapphire, and such red  
 Of throbbing depth as nothing can

With its intensest brilliance 'vie,  
 Save where some slave hath newly shed,  
 To tinge Assyrian ivory,  
 Rare tinct of that renownèd dye  
 Bright with blood-drops arachnean.

Now dip me the pencil fervidly  
 In the working warmth of that rich sky  
 Ere yet the tingling tints be faint,  
 That I this kingly Cock may paint  
 In his full-plumèd majesty  
 And robes of state regalian,  
 Marching majestic in the van  
 Of day, with glittering eye.

And all the while, through gleaming dawn,  
 From distant lands, let some long-drawn  
 And earnest music fitly come  
 Of chiding trump, and thund'rous drum,  
 Shrill-throated fife, lipp'd cymbals clear,  
 And flutes, that now and then may fawn  
 With flatteries fond, in Music's ear,  
 On martial purpose : while, by lawn  
 In sunlight sweet, or dewy dale,  
 The strenuous-marching sounds prevail,  
 Strong, sonorous, sweet, severe,  
 Thrilling the heart of the man who may hear,  
 Like the moving on of some mighty tale  
 Of chivalry, joust, and knightly cheer,  
 Toucht with touches of fine sweet fear.

## IX.

Trailing splendour, tossing sound  
 Of trumpet shrill, the region round ;

With blazing train like the cataract  
 Of spouted flame from out his crackt  
 Volcano-roof by Vulcan roll'd ;  
 Breast-plate broad of beaten gold,  
 Over amplest front smooth-spread ;  
 Scarlet crest, thick-turreted  
 As Cybele's, on stately head ;  
 Orient cuishes, greaves of steel,  
 Spleenful spur on knightly heel,  
 Full stately strides the stalwart Cock.

A scornful soldan he : no giaour  
 Of meaner plume from his walled bower,  
 If prowling caught, shall pass forgiven.  
 Oh, who his stately march may mock ?  
 Who match with him in prowess and power ?  
 Who emulate his virtues seven ?  
 In all the land  
 No peer may stand  
 Crest-high before the unconquer'd Cock !

## x.

He loveth well, for he hateth well :  
 In all he doeth he doth excel :  
 In all he hath he doth exult.  
 He is ever busy : early abroad :  
 Champion, bard, and sentinel :  
 Strong, tender, true, and terrible ;  
 He keepeth no good gift occult,  
 But doth with gladness worship God.  
 Glad to use his gracious gifts :  
 Glad to feel his force and power :  
 He loves the light : and, lofty, lifts

His honest head above the hour,  
 Looking on time as from a tower.  
 He cometh of an ancient stock,  
 To which the perfect flower  
     Of Chivalry was given.  
 Then nobly praise the noble Cock,  
 Proclaim his prowess and his power,  
     And sing his virtues seven.

## XI.

Chaunted, and told  
 To a harp of gold,  
 Upon seven strings, should his virtues be,  
 That be sevenfold,  
     As, in time of old,  
 Were the Seven Spirits of Chivalry :  
 Noble Valour that feareth none :  
 Prudence, that placeth what Valour hath won :  
 Vigilance, keen-eyed, that keepeth from fall :  
 Justice, the joyous controller of all :  
 Temperance, sober, that girdeth the will,  
 For he guardeth the falchion of Valour : and Skill,  
 That is sovereign, and swayeth all forces with ease :  
 And Love, the life-giver, that leadeth all these.  
 Chaunted, and told  
 To a harp of gold,  
 Upon seven strings, being seven-fold,  
 Worthy to be are his virtues : and we,  
     If we were as bold,  
         As loving, as free  
         And liberal-soul'd,  
         As wise, as he,

As sober, vigilant, tender, and just,  
And joyous, and scornful of mean mistrust,  
Then the world would be  
What the world to me  
Doth seem when I hear,  
In the sunshine clear,  
This minstrel making magnanimous cheer,  
And rejoicing in light with a heart of glee.  
For his brave song teacheth  
Timely content ;  
And far as it reacheth,  
My soul is sent,  
Honouring God's good government,  
And greeting the general joy of the world ;  
While music without and mirth within,  
Mingle my heart with the merry din  
Of a loud and sweet defiance hurl'd  
At darkness, and sorrow, and sin.

## XII.

Wherefore, soon as his trumpet of triumph doth ring  
In the roused air, praise we this noble king,  
Not scorning due homage unto him to bring,  
But feeling devoutly afraid  
Lest the gifts of the Giver to all of us, meant  
For high usage of worship and wonderment,  
By each soul be not wisely and worthily spent  
Upon aught that His wisdom hath made.  
And so praise we the bird that praiseth with might  
The day that dawneth to all,  
And praise we him while the early light  
From the low thatch doth fall

Aslant the moss-bound wall,  
 And well-clad paling white  
 With woodbine overgrown,  
 Or roses freshly blown  
 About the latticed farm,  
 And every wallflower brown  
 In homely gardens warm,  
 Or neat sweet-smelling stock.  
 For he deserveth praise,  
 The herald of our days !  
 And that to his high lays  
 Homage we daily raise,  
 Praising the praiseful Cock.

## XIII.

Praise him for beauty, that doth stand  
 In grace and grandeur, by the hand  
 Of his high Maker dight :  
 Praise him for gladness, and rejoice  
 With him to lift on lusty voice  
 Hosannas to the light :  
 Praise him for worship, for he waits  
 Upon the Lord, and in the gates  
 Of Morning sings with power :  
 Love thou the light; put darkness by  
 Betimes, and wait with watchful eye  
 Occasion's dawning hour :  
 Praise him for strength, and strongly use  
 Thy days and hours: pay life full dues  
 With an abundant heart :  
 Thy mortal passions put forth well,  
 To the utmost : be sincere : excel :

•  
Make perfect every part :  
Be unashamed, in all thou hast :  
Hate : hold thy heel on Satan fast :  
Fear : lest thou should'st offend :  
Desire : make all things more and more,  
Heap gain on gain, extend thy store :  
Resist, unto the end,—  
Lest thou be overthrown : be glad  
Heartily : heartily be sad :  
Serving the Lord both ways :  
Love, that thou may'st the most attain :  
Be jealous, lest thou lose a grain :  
All passions are for praise.  
O thou, the vigilant and strong !  
O minstrel of the morning song !  
O singer in the sun !  
Thou that dost first proclaim abroad  
The gladness and the glory of God  
To thy clear clarion !  
This lesson from thy life I learn :  
This lesson in thy song discern :  
Therefore I love thee well :  
Therefore with thine I fain would mate  
My hymn of praise, and emulate  
Thy high-toned oracle.

## THE STARLING.

SPRING's pilot; and her nimblest-wingèd darling,  
Despite the arrowy-flighted Swallow  
That in thy wake doth follow  
To rob thee of renown, belovèd Starling !  
Is it thy voice I hear,  
Loud all along the drear  
Misfeatured fens and fallows far away,  
Cleaving the cloudy air ?  
And nearer and more near,  
Till now thy note is there  
In the yet unblossom'd orchard, sprinkled through  
the scanty spray ;  
Once more, among the dews  
In green England, shedding news  
Of sunrise on the slopes of snowy Himalay !  
Full weary of old Winter, sick of sorrow,  
As I lay a-drowsing in the dark at dawn of day,  
Seeking to shut from sight a sunless morrow,  
And sueing to assist me flitting Sleep that would not  
stay,  
Out of dim lands remote  
Came a hoarse but happy note ;  
And then a scatter'd rustling, loud beyond the lattice  
eaves,  
Of jostled wings, a-riot in the rare and rainy leaves.  
Surely, surely, saucy angel  
Of young Spring's shrill-voiced evangèl,

Surely that was thou and thine,  
Singing songs yet somewhat hoarser for the sea-wind  
and the brine  
Lately left, and early come  
Here, where cold April grieves,  
Upon the few wet leaves,  
To build, in low-loop'd apple-boughs a dewy-latticed  
home.  
Yet can I not divine  
By any sight or sign,  
Blithe bird, whose brimming note the unsteady wind  
spills o'er the lea,  
For what reason thou hast sought  
A land so void of aught  
That may minister delight unto the merry heart in  
thee !  
Is it because thou hast  
Such a kindness for the past  
That from remember'd places thou canst never set  
thee free ?  
Or rather that, with some  
Strong souls, in things to come  
Such faith is thine that Spring, ere she approaches,  
thou canst see ?  
I, at least, thy loud *resurgams* having heard, for love  
of thee  
And thy noisy family,  
(Albeit thy voice, and theirs, be harsh and rude !)  
All the morn long have been roaming the wet field  
and wintry wood,  
The burthen of an old song humming,—  
'The Starlings are come ! and merry May,

And June, and the white-thorn, and the hay,  
 And the violet, and then the rose, and all good things,  
 are coming !

Little, little do men love thee  
 Who judge by outward seeming ;  
 And why should I approve thee,  
 Audacious bird, for screaming ?  
 Poets should be pleasant-tongued, and lovely in their  
 lays :  
 Not as thine must be the songs our laurel-leaf repays !  
 All thy ways are coarse ;  
 All thy notes are hoarse ;  
 Much noise, and little melody, thou makest, the world  
 says.  
 'Tis the truth of what thou singest,  
 Singing ere the woods be green,  
 The glad tidings which thou bringest,  
 And the poet-insight keen  
 Into all sweet things unseen,  
 'Tis the meaning, not the manner, of thy song which  
 I must praise.  
 But ah, herald ! Spring delays  
 To justify thy mission : stark, unstirr'd,  
 The blue woods watch thee : earth in dull amaze,  
 Coldly thy note hath heard ;  
 And still she looks perplext, still listens half offended,  
 Not trusting in thy word.  
 Thou comest before thy time, and unattended !  
 Thy boldest prophecies  
 Are mockt by cloudy skies :

Thy sweetest songs are all uncomprehended.

Yet still, of better days  
 Thou singest undeterr'd;  
 Still chantest thy lone lays  
 In merry scorn of praise,

Befriending thus a land that leaves thee unbefriended.

Wherefore, dear bird, thrice hail !

And may thy voice prevail,

Till all the world to thy glad creed be won !

Envy not thou Céyx, or Halcyon,

Their swooning seas, faint-lighted lands of fable,  
 And foamless isles, the tempest strikes not on,

That sleep in harbours green and hospitable ;  
 For thou within thyself, despite foul weather,

Hast golden calms and glories,  
 Like windless lights where wizards meet together

On stormy promontories.

With songs that shall avail

Through sound of sunlit hail,

Sing out thy happy news, and, yet again

Disdaining earth's disdain,

Unlock the shut leaves, one by one, to listen to thy  
 tale !

O leave to the luxurious Nightingale

Her moon-loved revels and her lush delights

In dewy leaves by many a dappled dale,

Or pleasant lawn, star-sweet on summer nights !

Thine is the Bardic chant, the battle strain,

The strenuous impulse thine,

Antagonizing wind, and sleety rain,

In the tough-headed pine.

Leave to the Lark his golden chariotings,  
And songs Memnonian in the shrill sunrise,  
And lordom lone o'er Dawn's delightful things !

Thy kingdom, with the coming season, lies  
Safe in some shelter'd vale of sleepy Time,  
Where yet-moss-bound primroses,  
And many a young first-love, and musèd rhyme,  
Thy clear-voiced call uncloses.

Care not, therefore, for cold patterning  
Of the hard white hail,  
Nor what engines rancorous March may bring,  
At the florid porches battering  
Of that visionary vale,

Whence, tho' skies be woeful-pale,  
Thou with faith that cannot fail,  
Earth's forlorn heart fondly flattering,  
Joyfully dost shout and sing.

Wince not, Bird, from Winter, scattering  
His spent snows against thy wing :  
Careless of the churlish chattering  
Of a half-discrownèd king,  
Let the wild winds wail !

Thy sweet summonsing  
Goeth on the gale,  
Warden of the Spring,  
To the hearts of hidden flowers,  
That shall people the pale bowers  
Greener growing from grey showers.

Vex not thy stout heart, nor chafe  
At the light and timid Swallow,  
Proffering his friendship shallow  
When his friend is safe.

A careless second comer,  
 He comes of common kind :  
 Secure of the world's summer,  
 And very sure to find—  
 What thou hast never known—  
 The fame that lags behind  
 The first who flies alone.

False and fickle, he !  
 (Truth is bitter!)  
 False and fickle, he  
 That takes the fame 'twere fitter  
 True hearts should render thee !  
 A bird that loves the glitter,  
 A thing of twitter, twitter,  
 Where many listeners be :  
 A fickle bird, I trow,  
 And a fickle friend to me !  
 But what is that to thee ?  
 Full little reckest thou  
 Of the rain in russet lands, or the wind around thee  
 snarling,  
 The Spring thou singest of is in thy heart, brave  
 Starling !

Therefore, to thee is given  
 An insight wildly-wise,  
 Into the purposes of heaven,  
 The secrets of the skies.  
 Thy friends are yet unborn :  
 The earliest violet,  
 The first bud on the thorn,

And the young roses, wet  
With tears of the first morn  
That doth rosebuds beget.  
Thy foes are yet a-dying :  
    Ragged-skirted rains,  
Winds, at random flying  
    Fast with cloudy manes,  
And the last snows, lying  
    Lost on chilly plains.  
Grief and Joy together,  
    Colloquize with thee ;  
Sad and sunny weather  
    Shift around the tree  
Where, not heeding either,  
    Thou art pouring free,  
Such live song as neither  
    (Harshest tho' it be)  
Critics' scorn can wither,  
    Nor their praises fee.  
A music over-winging,  
On laughter-lifted pinions,  
Earth's bleakness and despair,  
    Like old Amphion's singing  
To raise serene dominions,  
    And fashion from void air,  
Moved by the nimbly-sounding minions  
Of its majestic mandate everywhere,  
    Those blossomy battlements,  
        And green ascents,  
Where, in due time, shall dwell  
All the delicious sights, and sounds, and scents  
Of Spring's gay citadel.

**NARRATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE.**

**VOL. I.**



## GOOD-NIGHT IN THE PORCH.

### I.

A LITTLE longer in the light, love, let me be, The air is warm.

I hear the cuckoo's last good-night float from the copse below the Farm.

A little longer, Sister sweet—your hand in mine—on this old seat!

### II.

In yon red gable, which the rose creeps round and o'er, your casement shines

Against the yellow west, o'er those forlorn and solitary pines.

The long, loud day is nearly done. How silent all the place is grown !

### III.

From the warm upland comes a gust made fragrant with the brown hay there.

The meek cows, with their white horns thrust across the hedge, stand still and stare.

The steaming horses from the wains droop o'er the tank their plaited manes.

## IV.

And o'er yon hill-side brown and barren (where you  
and I as children play'd,  
Starting the rabbit to his warren), I hear the sandy,  
shril cascade  
Leap down upon the vale, and spill cool sound and  
light i' the lonesome Mill.

## V.

O can it be for nothing only that God hath shown  
His world to me?  
Or but to leave the heart more lonely for loss of  
beauty? Can it be?  
O closer, closer, Sister dear. . . . nay, I have kist  
away that tear.

## VI.

God bless you, for the tender thought which only  
upon tears could rise!  
God bless you for the love that sought to hide them  
in those drooping eyes,  
Whose lids I kiss! . . . poor lids, so red! but let my  
kiss fall there instead.

## VII.

Yes! sad, indeed, it seems each night,—and sadder,  
Sister, for your sake,—  
To watch the last low lingering light, and know not  
where the morn may break.  
To-night we sit together here. To-morrow night will  
come . . . ah, where?

## VIII.

O child ! howe'er assured be faith, to say farewell is  
fraught with gloom,  
When, like one flower, the germs of death and genius  
ripen toward the tomb ;  
And earth each day, as some fond face at parting,  
wears a graver grace.

## IX.

There's not a flower, there's not a tree, in this old  
garden where we sit,  
But what some fragrant memory is closed and folded  
up in it.  
To-night the dog-rose smells as wild, as fresh, as  
when I was a child.

## X.

'Tis eight years since (do you forget ?) we set those  
lilies near the wall :  
You were a blue-eyed child : even yet I seem to see  
the ringlets fall—  
The golden ringlets, blown behind your shoulders in  
the merry wind !

## XI.

Ah me ! old times,—the sweet, the sting ! And oft,  
by yonder green old gate  
The field shows through, in morns of Spring, an  
eager boy, I paused elate  
With all sweet fancies loosed from school. And oft,  
you know, when eves were cool

## XII.

In August, bold as two young rooks perch'd in a  
belfry by themselves,  
We, chatting of our favourite books, light-hearted  
over-weening elves,  
Dealt praise or blame to poets gone, here in the  
woodbine-porch alone.

## XIII.

Ah, there's my epic—I began when life seem'd long,  
though longer art,—  
And all the glorious deeds of man made golden riot  
in my heart—  
Eight books . . . it will not number nine ! I die  
before my heroine.

## XIV.

Sister ! they say that drowning men in one wild  
moment can recall  
Their whole life long, and feel again the pain—the  
bliss—that throng'd it all.  
Last night those phantoms of the Past again came  
crowding round me fast.

## XV.

Near morning, when the lamp was low, against the  
wall they seem'd to flit ;  
And, as the wavering light would glow or fall, they  
came and went with it.  
The ghost of boyhood seem'd to gaze down the dark  
verge of vanish't days.

## XVI.

Once more the garden, where she walk'd on summer  
eves to tend her flowers,  
Once more the lawn, where first we talk'd of future  
years in twilight hours,  
Arose ; once more she seem'd to pass before me, in  
the waving grass,

## XVII.

To that old terrace ; her bright hair about her warm  
neck all undone,  
And waving on the balmy air, with tinges of the  
dying sun ;  
Just one bright star in the broad west ; just one bird  
singing near its nest.

## XVIII.

So lovely, so beloved ! Oh fair as though that sun  
had never set  
Which staid upon her golden hair, in dreams I seem  
to see her yet !  
To see her in that old green place—the same husht  
smiling cruel face !

## XIX.

A little older, love, than you are now ; and I was then  
a boy ;  
And wild and wayward-hearted too ; to her my passion  
was a toy,  
Soon broken ! ah, a foolish thing—a butterfly with  
crumpled wing !

## XX.

Her hair, too, was like yours—as bright, but with a  
warmer golden tinge ;  
Her eyes, a somewhat deeper light, and dream'd be-  
neath a longer fringe :  
And still that strange grave smile she had stays in my  
soul and keeps it sad !

## XXI.

From little things—a star, a flower—that touch'd us  
with the self-same thought,  
My passion deepen'd hour by hour, until to that fierce  
heat 'twas wrought,  
Which, shrivelling over every nerve, crumbled the  
outworks of reserve.

## XXII.

I told her then, in that wild time, the love I knew  
she long had seen ;  
The accusing pain that burn'd like crime, yet left me  
nobler than I had been ;  
What matter with what words I woo'd her ? She  
said I had misunderstood her.

## XXIII.

Misunderstood ! misunderstood ! . . . Ay, not her  
only, but thereby  
All that souls say in flesh and blood ! misunder-  
standing till I die  
The meaning of that face, the while my heart lay  
aching in its smile.

## XXIV.

Misunderstood? misunderstood? ay, life, love, all  
things, when, alone,  
I heard the crashing of my blood on the brute silence!  
She was gone.  
The stinging sunlight stabb'd me through the leaves.  
Above, the blind, bright blue

## XXV.

Laugh'd, with no meaning, in my face. And nothing  
could I realize  
Save a dull strangeness,—the disgrace of a stunn'd  
impotent surprise.  
The great noon gaped: blithe birds were shrill. The  
world went on; my heart stood still.

## XXVI.

My heart stands still, the world goes on, the years  
go by, and now a mild  
Unmurmuring mind hath sorrow won from memory.  
I have seen her child,—  
The self-same eyes her mother had,—that once had  
power to make me mad!

## XXVII.

Dark violet eyes whose glances, deep with April-  
hints of sunny tears,  
'Neath long soft lashes laid asleep, seem'd all too  
thoughtful for her years!  
As though from mine her gaze had caught the secret  
of some mournful thought.

## XXVIII.

But when she spake, her father's air broke o'er her . . .  
that clear confident voice !  
Some happy souls there are that wear their nature  
lightly; these rejoice  
The world by living, and receive from all men more  
than what they give.

## XXIX.

One handful of their buoyant chaff exceeds our hoards  
of careful grain :  
Because their love breaks through their laugh, while  
ours is fraught with tender pain :  
The world, that knows itself too sad, is proud to keep  
some faces glad :

## XXX.

And, so it is ! from such an one Misfortune softly  
steps aside,  
To let him still walk in the sun. These things must  
be. I cannot chide.  
Had I been she, I might have made the self-same  
choice. She shunn'd the shade.

## XXXI.

To some men God hath given laughter : but tears to  
some men He hath given.  
He bade us sow in tears, hereafter to harvest holier  
smiles in Heaven ;  
And tears and smiles, they are His gift : both good,  
to smite or to uplift.

## XXXII.

He knows His sheep : and some His showers shall  
whiten, some His suns shall warm.  
Our pains are portion'd to our powers. His hand  
may hurt, but cannot harm.  
He tempers smiles with tears, both good to bear in  
time the Christian mood.

## XXXIII.

O yet—in scorn of mean relief, let Sorrow bear her  
heavenly fruit !  
Better the wildest hour of grief than the low pastime  
of the brute !  
Better to weep, for He wept too, than laugh as every  
fool can do.

## XXXIV.

For, sure, 'twere best to bear the cross ; nor lightly  
fling the thorns behind,  
Lest we grow happy by the loss of what was noblest  
in the mind. !  
Here—in the ruins of my years—Father, I bless  
Thee, through these tears !

## XXXV.

It was in the far foreign lands this sickness came  
upon me first.  
By hot winds scorching desert sands this fever of the  
south was nurst,  
Until it reach'd some vital part. I die not of a broken  
heart.

## XXXVI.

O think not that! If I could live . . . there's much  
to live for, worthy life.  
It is not for what fame could give—though that I  
scorn not—but the strife  
Were noble for its own sake too. I thought that I  
had much to do—

## XXXVII.

But God begins, child, where men end . . . Hark!  
'twas the bittern, as he rose  
Against the glaring river-bend. How red your little  
casement glows!  
The night falls fast. How lonely, Dear, this bleak  
old house will look next year!

## XXXVIII.

So sad a thought? . . . ah, yes! I know it is not  
well to brood on this:  
And yet—such thoughts will come and go, unbidden.  
'Tis that you should miss,  
My darling, one familiar tone of this weak voice when  
I am gone.

## XXXIX.

And for what's past—I will not say in what she did  
that all was right,  
But all's forgiven; and I pray for her life's welfare  
day and night.  
All things are changed! This cheek would glow even  
near hers but faintly now!

## XL.

Thou God ! before whose sleepless eye not even in  
vain the sparrows fall,  
Receive, sustain me ! sanctify my soul. Thou know'st  
Thou lovest all.  
Too weak to walk alone—I see Thy hand : I falter  
back to Thee.

## XLI.

Saved from the curse of time which throws its base-  
ness on us day by day :  
Its wretched joys and worthless woes ; till all the  
heart is worn away.  
I feel Thee near. I hold my breath by the half-open  
doors of Death.

## XLII.

And, sometimes, glimpses from within of glory (won-  
drous sight and sound !)  
Float near me :—faces pure from sin : strange music :  
saints with splendour crown'd :  
I seem to feel my native air blow down from some high  
region there,

## XLIII.

And fan my spirit pure : I rise above the sense of  
loss and pain :  
Faint forms that lured my childhood's eyes, long lost,  
I seem to find again :  
I see the end of all : I feel hope, awe, no language  
can reveal.

## XLIV.

Forgive me, Lord, if overmuch I loved that form Thou  
mad'st so fair:  
I know that Thou didst make her such; and fair but  
as the flowers were—  
Thy work: her beauty was but Thine: the human  
less than the divine.

## XLV.

My life hath been one search for Thee 'mid thorns  
found red with Thy dear blood:  
In many a dark Gethsemanë I seem'd to stand where  
Thou hadst stood:  
And, scorn'd in this world's judgment-place, at times,  
through tears, to catch Thy face.

## XLVI.

Thou suffered'st here, and didst not fail: Thy bleed-  
ing feet these paths have trod:  
But Thou wert strong, and I am frail: and I am  
man, and Thou wert God.  
Be near me: keep me in Thy sight: or lay my soul  
asleep in light.

## XLVII.

O to be where the meanest mind is more than Shake-  
speare! where one look  
Shows more than here the wise can find though toil-  
ing slow from book to book!  
Where life is knowledge: love is sure: and hope's  
brief promise made secure.

## XLVIII.

O dying voice of human praise ! the crude ambitions  
of my youth !  
I long to pour immortal lays ! great paeans of peren-  
nial truth !  
A larger work ! a loftier aim ! . . . and what are laurel  
leaves and fame ?

## XLIX.

And what are words ? How little these the silence of  
the soul express !  
Mere froth—the foam and flower of seas whose  
hungering waters heave and press  
Against the planets and the sides of night—mute,  
yearning mystic tides !

## L.

To ease the heart with song is sweet : sweet to be  
heard if heard by love.  
And you have heard me. When we meet shall we  
not sing the old songs above  
To grander music ? Sweet one, kiss. O blest it is to  
die like this !

## LI.

To lapse from being without pain : your hand in  
mine, on mine your heart,  
The unshaken faith to meet again that sheathes the  
pang with which we part :  
My head upon your bosom, Sweet : your hand in  
mine on this old seat !

## KING SOLOMON AND THE MOUSE.

(Rabbinical.)

## I.

KING Solomon stood, in his crown of gold,  
Between the pillars before the altar,  
In the house of the Lord. And the King was old,  
And his strength began to falter,  
So that he lean'd on his ebony staff,  
Seal'd with the seal of the Pentograph.

## II.

All of the golden fretted work,  
Without and within so rich and rare,  
As high as the nest of the building stork,  
Those pillars of cedar were :—  
Wrought up to the brazen chapiters  
Of the Sidonian artificers.

## III.

And the King stood still as a carven king,  
The carven cedar beams below,  
In his purple robe, with his signet ring,  
And his beard as white as snow,  
And his face to the Oracle, where the hymn  
Dies under the wings of the Cherubim.

## IV.

The wings fold over the Oracle,  
And cover the heart and eyes of God :

The Spouse with pomegranate, lily, and bell,  
 Is glorious in her abode ;  
 For with gold of Ophir, and scent of myrrh,  
 And purple of Tyre, the King clothed her.

## v.

By the soul of each slumbrous instrument  
 Drawn soft through the musical misty air,  
 The stream of the folk that came and went,  
 For worship and praise and prayer,  
 Flow'd to and fro, and up and down,  
 And round the King in his golden crown.

## vi.

And it came to pass, as the King stood there,  
 And look'd on the house he had built, with pride,  
 That the Hand of the Lord came unaware,  
 And touch'd him ; so that he died,  
 In his purple robe, with his signet ring,  
 And the crown wherewith they had crown'd him king.

## vii.

And the stream of the folk that came and went  
 To worship the Lord with prayer and praise,  
 Went softly ever, in wonderment,  
 For the King stood there always ;  
 And it was solemn and strange to behold  
 That dead king crown'd with a crown of gold.

## viii.

For he lean'd on his ebony staff upright !  
 And over his shoulders the purple robe ;

And his hair, and his beard, were both snow-white ;  
And the fear of him fill'd the globe ;  
So that none dared touch him, though he was dead,  
He look'd so royal about the head.

## IX.

And the moons were changed : and the years roll'd on :  
And the new king reign'd in the old king's stead :  
And men were married and buried anon :  
But the King stood, stark and dead ;  
Leaning upright on his ebony staff ;  
Preserved by the sign of the Pentagraph.

## X.

And the stream of life, as it went and came,  
Ever for worship and praise and prayer,  
Was awed by the face, and the fear, and the fame  
Of the Dead King standing there ;  
For his hair was so white, and his eyes so cold,  
That they left him alone with his crown of gold,

## XI.

Magnificent, dead, and dread, in the House  
Of the Lord, held there by the Pentagraph !  
Until out from a pillar there ran a red mouse,  
And gnaw'd through his ebony staff !  
Then, flat on his face, the King fell down :  
And they pick'd from the dust a golden crown.

## THE DEATH OF KING HACON.

## I.

It was Odin that whisper'd in Vingolf,  
“ Go forth to the heath by the sea ;  
Find Hacon before the moon rises,  
And bid him to supper with me.”

## II.

They go forth to choose from the Princes  
Of Yngvion, and summons from fight  
A man who must perish in battle,  
And sup where the gods sup to-night.

## III.

Leaning over her brazen spear, Gondula  
Thus bespeak her companions, “ The feast  
Of the gods shall, in Vingolf, this evening,  
O ye Daughters of War, be encreast.

## IV.

“ For Odin hath beckon'd unto me,  
For Odin hath whisper'd me forth,  
To bid to his supper King Hacon  
With the half of the hosts of the North.”

## V.

Their horses gleam'd white through the vapour :  
In the moonlight their corselets did shine :  
As they waver'd and whisper'd together,  
And fashion'd their solemn design.

## VI.

Hacon heard them discoursing—"Why hast thou  
Thus disposed of the battle so soon?  
Oh were we not worthy of conquest?  
Lo! we die by the rise of the moon."

## VII.

"It is not the moon that is rising,  
But the glory which penetrates death,  
When heroes to Odin are summon'd:  
Rise, Hacon, and stand on the heath!"

## VIII.

"It is we," she replied, "that have given  
To thy pasture the flower of the fight,  
It is we, it is we, that have scatter'd  
Thine enemies yonder in flight.

"Come now, let us push on our horses  
Over yonder green worlds in the east,  
Where the great gods are gather'd together,  
And the tables are piled for the feast.

## X.

"Betimes to give notice to Odin,  
Who waits in his sovran abodes,  
That the King to his palace is coming  
This evening to visit the gods."

## XI.

Odin rose when he heard it, and with him  
Rose the gods, every god to his feet.  
He beckon'd Hermoder and Brago,  
They came to him, each from his seat.

## XII.

" Go forth, O my sons, to King Hacon,  
And meet him and greet him from all,  
A King that we know by his valour  
Is coming to-night to our hall."

## XIII.

Then faintly King Hacon approaches,  
Arriving from battle, and sore  
With the wounds that yet bleed through his armour,  
Bedabbled and dripping with gore.

## XIV.

His visage is pallid and awful  
With the awe and pallor of death,  
Like the moon that at midnight arises  
Where the battle lies strewn on the heath.

## XV.

To him spake Hermoder and Brago,  
" We meet thee and greet thee from all,  
To the gods thou art known by thy valour,  
And they bid thee a guest to their hall.

## XVI.

“Come hither, come hither, King Hacon,  
 And join those eight brothers of thine,  
 Who already, awaiting thy coming,  
 With the gods in Walhala recline.

## XVII.

“And loosen, O Hacon, thy corslet,  
 For thy wounds are yet ghastly to see.  
 Go, pour ale in the circle of heroes,  
 And drink, for the gods drink to thee !”

## XVIII.

But he answer'd, the hero, “I never  
 Will part with the armour I wear.  
 Shall a warrior stand before Odin  
 Unshamed, without helmet and spear ?”

## XIX.

Black Fenris, the wolf, the destroyer,  
 Shall arise and break loose from his chain,  
 Before that a hero like Hacon  
 Shall stand in the battle again.

## QUEEN GUENEVERE.

THENCE, up the sea-green floor, among the stems  
 Of mighty columns whose unmeasured shades  
 From aisle to aisle, unheeded in the sun,  
 Moved without sound, I, following all alone

A strange desire that drew me like a hand,  
Came unawares upon the Queen.

She sat

In a great silence, which her beauty fill'd  
Full to the heart of it, on a black chair  
Mail'd all about with sullen gems, and crusts  
Of sultry blazonry. Her face was bow'd,  
A pause of slumbrous beauty, o'er the light  
Of some delicious thought new-risen above  
The deeps of passion. Round her stately head  
A single circlet of the red gold fine  
Burn'd free, from which, on either side stream'd down  
Twilights of her soft hair, from neck to foot.  
Green was her kertle as the emerolde is,  
And stiff from hem to hem with scums of stones  
Beyond all value ; which, from left to right  
Disparting, half reveal'd the snowy gleam  
Of a white robe of spotless samyte pure.  
And from the soft repression of her zone,  
Which, like a light hand on a lutestring, press'd  
Harmony from its touch, flow'd warmly back  
The beauteous outlines of a glowing grace,  
Nor yet outflow'd sweet laws of loveliness.

Then did I feel as one who, much perplext,  
Led by strange legends and the light of stars  
Over long regions of the midnight sand  
Beyond the red tract of the Pyramids,  
Is suddenly drawn to look upon the sky  
From sense of unfamiliar light, and sees,  
Reveal'd against the constellated cope,  
The Great Cross of the South.

The chamber round  
Was dropt with arras green ; and I could hear,  
In courts far off, a minstrel praising May,  
Who sang . . . *Si douce, si douce est lu Margarete !*  
To a faint lute. Upon the window-sill,  
Hard by a latoun bowl that blazed i' the sun,  
Perch'd a strange fowl, a Falcon Perigrine ;  
With all his feathers puft for pride, and all  
His courage glittering outward in his eye ;  
For he had flown from far, athwart strange lands,  
And o'er the light of many a setting sun,  
Lured by his love (such sovereignty of old  
Had Beauty in all courts of Christendom !)  
To look into the great eyes of the Queen.

### KING HERMANDIAZ.

THEN, standing by the shore, I saw the moon  
Change hue, and dwindle in the west, as when  
Warm looks fade inward out of dying eyes,  
And the dim sea began to moan.

I knew  
My hour had come, and to the bark I went.  
Still were the stately decks, and hung with silk  
Of stolèd crimson : at the masthead burn'd  
A steadfast fire with influence like a star ;  
And underneath a couch of gold. I loosed  
The dripping chain. There was not any wind :  
But all at once the magic sails began  
To belly and heave, and, like a bat that wakes

And flits by night, beneath her swarthy wings  
The black ship rock'd, and moved. I heard anon  
A humming in the cordage, and a sound  
Like bees in summer, and the bark went on,  
And on, and on, until at last the world  
Was roll'd away and folded out of sight,  
And I was all alone on the great sea.

There a deep awe fell on my spirit. My wound  
Began to bite. I, gazing round, beheld  
A Lady sitting silent at the helm,  
A woman white as death, and fair as dreams.  
I would have asked her "Whither do we sail?"  
And "how?" but that my fear clung at my heart,  
And held me still. She, answering my doubt,  
Said slowly, "To the Isle of Avalon."

And straightway we were nigh a strand all gold,  
That glitter'd in the moon between the dusk  
Of hanging bowers, broad, lustrous, somnolent,  
Where dropp'd the trailing rose from belt to belt  
Of sea-bank myrtle spray, and, all about  
The labyrinthine hollows underneath,  
The red and purple dragon-mouths were bright  
And thick, with knots of twinkling asphodel,  
That strew'd a summer darkness of deep grass  
Delicious, and a multitude of flowers  
Marvellous, most sweet-savour'd, all unlike  
The flowers that live about in other lands;  
Wherfrom faint gusts came to me; and I heard  
A sound of lutes among the vales, and songs  
Of voices faint like voices through a dream,  
That said, or seem'd to say, "Hail, Hermandiaz!"

## THE NIGHT BEFORE THE JOUSTS.

THE summer night was starry, sweet, and still :  
The oak-leaf moved not on the moonlit hill :  
Warm, in the broad lake bathed the milkwhite stars  
Without a shudder : lights from lattice bars  
Died, one by one, to darkness : still he stood  
Without, and watch'd them in a happy mood,  
And sang . . .

All night the moonbeams bathe the sward.  
There's not an eye to-night in Joyous-Gard  
That is not dreaming something sweet. I wake  
Because it is more sweet to dream awake :  
Dreaming I see thy face upon the lake.

I am come up from far, love, to behold thee,  
That hast waited for me so bravely and well  
Thy sweet life long (for the Fairies had told thee  
I am the Knight that shall loosen the spell),  
And to-morrow morn my arms shall enfold thee :  
And to-morrow night . . . ah, who can tell ?

As the spirit of some dark lake  
Pines at nightfall, wild-awake,  
For the approaching consummation  
Of a great moon he divines  
Coming to her coronation  
Of the dazzling stars and signs,

So my heart, my heart,  
Darkly (ah, and tremblingly !)  
Waits in mystic expectation,  
From its wild source far apart,  
Until it be fill'd with thee—  
With the full-orb'd light of thee—  
O belovèd, as thou art !  
With the soft sad smile that flashes  
Underneath thy long dark lashes ;  
And thy floating raven hair,  
From its wreathèd pearls let slip ;  
And thy breath, like balmy air ;  
And thy warm wet rosy lip,  
With my first kiss lingering there ;  
Its sweet secret unreveal'd—  
Seal'd by me, to me unseal'd ;  
And . . . but, ah ! she lies asleep  
In yon gray stone castle-keep,  
On her lids the happy tear ;  
And alone I linger here ;  
And to-morrow morn the fight ;  
And . . . ah, me ! to-morrow night ?

## THE EARL'S RETURN.

## I.

RAGGED and tall stood the castle wall.  
And the squires, at their sport, in the great South  
Court,

Lounged all day long from stable to hall  
Laughingly, lazily, one and all.  
The land about was barren and blue,  
And swept by the wing of the wet sea-mew.  
Seven fishermen's huts on a shelly shore :  
Sand-heaps behind, and sand-banks before :  
And a black champaign streaked white all through  
To a great salt pool which the ocean drew,  
Suck'd into itself, and disgorged it again  
To stagnate and steam on the mineral plain :  
Not a tree nor a bush in the circle of sight,  
But a bare black thorn which the sea-winds had  
wither'd  
With the drifting scum of the surf and blight,  
And some patches of gray grass-land to the right,  
Where the lean red-hided cattle were tether'd :  
A reef of rock wedged the water in twain,  
And a stout stone tower stood square to the main.

## II.

And the flakes of the spray that were jerk'd away  
From the froth on the lip of the bleak blue sea  
Were sometimes flung by the wind, as it swung  
Over turret and terrace and balcony,  
To the garden below where, in desolate corners  
Under the mossy green parapet there,  
The lilies crouch'd, rocking their white heads like  
mourners,  
And burn'd off the heads of the flowers, that were  
Pining and pale in their comfortless bowers,  
Dry-bush'd with the sharp stubborn lavender,  
And paveen with disks of the torn sun-flowers,

Which, day by day, were strangled, and stripp'd  
Of their ravell'd fringes and brazen bosses,  
And the hardy mary-buds nipp'd and ripp'd  
Into shreds for the beetles that lurk'd in the mosses.

## III.

Here she lived alone, and from year to year  
She saw the bleak belt of the ocean appear  
At her casement each morn as she rose ; and each morn  
Her eye fell first on the bare black thorn.  
This was all : nothing more : or sometimes on the shore  
The fisherman sang when the fishing was o'er ;  
Or the lowing of oxen fell dreamily,  
Close on the shut of the glimmering eves,  
Through some gusty pause in the moaning sea,  
When the pools were splash'd pink by the thirsty  
beeves.

Or sometimes, when the pearl-lighted morns drew the  
tinges

Of the cold sunrise up their amber fringes,  
A white sail peer'd over the rim of the main,  
Look'd all about o'er the empty sea,  
Stagger'd back from the fine line of white light again,  
And dropp'd down to another world silently.  
Then she breath'd freer. With sickening dread  
She had watch'd five pale young moons unfold  
From their notchy cavern in light, and spread  
To the fuller light, and again grow old,  
And dwindle away to a luminous shred.  
“ He will not come back till the Spring's green and  
gold.

And I would that I with the leaves were dead,

Quiet somewhere, with them, in the moss and the  
mould,  
When he and the Summer come this way," she said.

## IV.

And when the dull sky darken'd down to the edges,  
And the keen frost kindled in star and spar,  
The sea might be known by a noise on the ledges  
Of the long crags, gathering power from afar  
Through his roaring bays, and crawling back  
Hissing, as o'er the wet pebbles he dragg'd  
His skirt of foam fray'd, dripping, and jagg'd,  
And reluctantly fell down the smooth hollow shell  
Of the night, whose lustrous surface of black  
In spots to an intense blue was worn.  
But later, when up on the sullen sea-bar  
The wide large-lighted moon had arisen,  
Where the dark and voluminous ocean grew luminous,  
Helping after her slowly one little shy star  
That shook blue in the cold, and look'd forlorn,  
The thin clouds 'gan roll, and the wind far off  
Behind them leap'd down with a light laugh of scorn,  
At the land's drear leanness to snarl and scoff.  
Then the last thing she saw was that bare black thorn :  
For, by as he went, the bleak blast took it,  
Howl'd through it, and beat it, and bit it, and shook it ;  
And such weakness and wickedness mix'd together  
Never were seen as in that crouch'd, lean,  
And shuddering tree, like a dwarfish elf,  
Caught hiding his heap of stolen pelf,  
And choked in the grasp of the giant weather.

## NARRATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE.

### v.

And the snow was lifted into the air  
Layer by layer,  
And turn'd into vast white clouds that flew  
Silent and fleet up the sky, and were riven  
And jerk'd into chasms which the sun leap'd through,  
Opening crystal gulfs of a breezy blue  
Fed with rainy lights of the April heaven.  
From eaves and leaves the quivering dew  
Sparkled off ; and the rich earth, black and bare,  
Was starr'd with snow-drops everywhere,  
And the crocus upturn'd its flame, and burn'd  
Here and there.  
“The Summer,” she said, “cometh blithe and bold ;  
And the crocus is lit for her welcoming ;  
And the days will have garments of purple and gold ;  
But I would be left by the pale green Spring  
With the snow-drops somewhere under the mould ;  
For I dare not think what the Summer may bring.”

### VI.

Pale she was as the bramble blooms  
That fill the long fields with their faint perfumes,  
When the May-wind flits finely through sun-threaded  
showers,  
Breathing low to himself in his dim meadow-bowers.  
And her cheek each year was paler and thinner,  
And white as the pearl that was hung at her ear,  
As her sad heart sicken'd and pined within her,  
And fail'd and fainted from year to year.  
So that the Seneschal, rough and gray,

Said, as he look'd in her face one day,  
" St. Catherine save all good souls I pray,  
For the sweetest Christian soul, I ween,  
Day by day is dying away  
In the saddest eyes were ever seen.  
O the Saints," he said, smiling bitter and grim,  
" Know she's too fair and too good for him !"

## VII.

Sometimes she walk'd on the upper leads,  
And lean'd on the arm of the weather-worn Warden :  
Sometimes she sat 'twixt the mildewy beds  
Of the sea-singed flowers in the Pleasaunce Garden ;  
Till the rotting blooms that lay thick on the walks  
Were comb'd by the white sea-gust like a rake,  
And the stimulant steam of the leaves and stalks  
Made the coilèd Memory, numb and cold,  
That slept in her heart like a dreaming snake,  
Drowsily lift himself fold by fold,  
And gnaw and gnaw hungrily, half-awake.

## VIII.

Sometimes she look'd from the window below  
To the great South Court, and the squires, at their  
sport,  
Loungingly loitering to and fro.  
She heard the grooms there as they cursed one an-  
other.

She heard the great bowls falling all day long  
In the bowling alleys. She heard the song  
Of the shock-headed Pages that drank without stint in  
The echoing courts, and swore hard at each other.  
She saw the red face of the rough wooden Quintin,  
And the swinging sand-bag ready to smother

The awkward Squire that miss'd the mark.  
And, all day long, between the dull noises  
Of the bowls, and the oaths, and the singing voices,  
The sea boom'd hoarse till the skies were dark.

## IX.

But when the swallow, that sweet new-comer,  
Floated over the sea in the front of the Summer,  
The salt dry sands burn'd white, and sicken'd  
Men's sight in the glaring horn of the bay;  
And all things that fasten, or float at ease  
In the silvery light of the leprous seas  
With the pulse of a hideous life were quicken'd,  
Fell loose from the rocks, and crawl'd crosswise away.  
Slippery sidelong crabs, half strangled  
By the white sea-grasses in which they were tangled,  
And those half-living creatures, orb'd, ray'd, and  
sharp-angled,  
Fan-fish, and star-fish, and polypous lumps,  
Hueless and boneless, that languidly thicken'd,  
Or flat-faced, or spik'd, or ridg'd with humps,  
Melting off from their clotted clusters and clumps,  
Sprawl'd over the shore in the heat of the day.

## X.

An hour before the sun was set  
A darker ripple roll'd over the sea ;  
The white rocks quiver'd in wells of jet ;  
And the great West, opening breathlessly  
Up all his inmost orange, gave  
Hints of something distant and sweet  
That made her heart swell ; far up the wave

The clouds that lay piled in the golden heat  
Were turn'd into types of the ancient mountains  
In an ancient land ; the weeds, which forlorn  
Waves were swaying neglectfully,  
By their sound, as they dipp'd into sparkles that  
dripp'd  
In the emerald creeks that ran up from the shore,  
Brought back to her fancy the bubble of fountains  
Leaping and falling continually  
In valleys where she should wander no more.

## xi.

And when, over all of these, the night  
Of the great Midsummer, strong, measureless, bright,  
Benignant and beauteous, from height over height,  
With depth within depth of a passion divine  
Burst into blossom of stars and light,  
And the far beacon cliffs were beginning to shine,  
The sea was glassy ; the glassy brine  
Was paven with purple and crystalline,  
But broken, and dimpled, and sportively riven,  
Dash'd into, and danc'd through and through, by  
swift-driven  
Soft-wandering gleams from light footsteps flung  
Of unseen sea-fairies the rocks among ;  
While about it, above it, and bathing it all,  
Like a great heart grieving in Beauty's thrall,  
The bounteous Darkness heavily hung  
Balanced under the buoyant moon, and slung,  
With no scope for escape, athwart foreland and cape,  
In a net of silver sparkles. Then she  
Rippled her yellow hair to her knee,

Bared her warm white bosom and throat,  
And from the lattice lean'd athirst.  
There, on the silence did she gloat  
With a dizzy pleasure steep'd in pain,  
Half catching the soul of the secret that blended  
God with His starlight, then feeling it vain,  
Like a pining poet ready to burst  
With the weight of the wonder that grows in his brain,  
Or a nightingale, mute at the sound of a lute  
That is swelling and breaking his heart with its strain,  
Waiting, breathless, to die when the music is ended.  
For the sleek and beautiful Midnight stole,  
Like a faithless friend, her secret care,  
Crept through each pore to the source of the soul,  
And mock'd at the anguish which he found there,  
Shining away from her, scornful and fair  
In his pitiless beauty, refusing to share  
The discontent which he could not control.

## XII.

Thus full many a night,  
Steep'd pale in the light  
Of the stars, when the bells and clocks  
Had ceased in the towers,  
And the sound of the hours  
Was eddying about in the rocks,  
Deep-sunken in bristling broidery  
Between the black oak Fiends sat she,  
And under the moth-flitted canopy  
Of the mighty antique bed in her chamber,  
With wild eyes drinking up the sea,  
And her white hands heavy with jewelry,

Flashing as she loosed languidly  
Her satins of snow and of amber.  
And as, fold by fold, these were rippled and roll'd  
To her feet, and lay huddled in ruins of gold,  
She look'd like some pale spirit above  
Earth's dazzling passions for ever flung by,  
Freed from the stains of an earthly love,  
And those splendid shackles of pride that press  
On the heart till it aches with the gorgeous stress,  
Quitting the base Past remorsefully.  
And so she put by the coil and care  
Of the day that lay furl'd like an idle weft  
Of heap'd spots which a bright snake hath left,  
Or that dark house, the blind worm's lair,  
When the star-wing'd moth from the windows hath  
crept,  
Steep'd her soul in a tearful prayer,  
Shrank into her naked self, and slept.

## XIII.

And as she slumber'd, starr'd and eyed  
All over with angry gems, at her side,  
The Fiends in the oak kept ward and watch ;  
And the querulous clock, on its rusty catch,  
With a quick tick, husky and thick,  
Clamour'd and clack'd at her sharply.

There was

(Fronting a portrait of the Earl)  
A shrine with a dim green lamp, and a cross  
Of glowing cedar wreath'd with pearl,  
Which the Arimathæan, so it was writ,  
When he came from the holy Orient,

Had worn, by his prayers embalming it,  
As with the San-Grael through the world he went.  
Underneath were reliques and gems  
From many an antique king-saint's crown,  
And some ('twas avouch'd) from the dusk diadems  
And mighty rings of those Wise Kings  
That evermore sleep 'mid the marble stems,  
'Twixt chancel and chalice in God His palace,  
The marvel of Cologne Town.  
In a halo dim of the lamp all night  
Smiled the sad Virgin, holy and white,  
With a face as full of the soul's affliction  
As one that had look'd on the Crucifixion.

## XIV.

At moon-rise the land was suddenly brighter ;  
And through all its length and breadth the casement  
Grew large with a luminous strange amazement ;  
And, as doubting in dreams what that sudden blaze  
meant,  
The Lady's white face turn'd a thought wider.

## XV.

Sometimes in sleep light finger-tips  
Touch'd her behind ; the pain, the bliss  
Of a long slow despairing kiss  
Doubled the heat on her feverish lips,  
And down to her heart's heart smouldering burn'd ;  
From lips long mute she heard her name :  
Sad dreams and sweet to vex her came ;  
Sighing, upon her pillow she turn'd,  
Like a weary waif on a weary sea  
That is heaving over continually,

And finds no course, until for its sake  
The heart of the silence begins to ache.  
Unsooth'd from slumber she awoke  
An hour ere dawn. The lamp burn'd faint.  
The Fiends glared at her out of the oak.  
She rose, and fell at the shrine of the Saint.  
There, with clasp'd hands to the Mother  
Of many sorrows, in sorrow, she pray'd ;  
Till all things in the room melted into each other,  
And vanish'd in gyres of flickering shade,  
Leaving her all alone, with the face  
Of the Saint growing large in its one bright place.  
Then on a sudden, from far, a fear  
Through all her heart its horror drew,  
As of something hideous growing near.  
Cold fingers seem'd roaming through her damp hair.  
Her lips were lock'd. The power of prayer  
Left her. She dared not turn. She knew,  
From his panel atilt on the wall up there,  
The grim Earl was gazing her through and through.

## xvi.

And the Summer into the Autumn waned.  
And under the watery Hyades  
The gray sea swell'd, and the thick sky rain'd  
And the land was darken'd by slow degrees.

## xvii.

But oft, in the low West, the day,  
Smouldering, sent up a sullen flame  
Along the dreary waste of gray,  
As though in that red region lay,

## NARRATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE.

Heap'd up, like Autumn weeds and flowers  
For fire, its thorny, fruitless hours,  
And God said, "Burn it all away!"

### XVIII.

When all was dreariest in the skies,  
And the gusty tract of twilight mutter'd,  
A strange slow smile grew into her eyes,  
As though from a great way off it came  
And was weary ere down to her lips it flutter'd,  
And turn'd into a sigh, or some soft name  
Whose syllables sounded likest sighs,  
Half-smother'd in sorrow before they were utter'd.

### XIX.

Sometimes, at night, a music was roll'd—  
A ripple of silver harp-strings cold—  
From the halls below where the Minstrel sung,  
With the silver hair, and the golden tongue,  
And the eyes of passionless, peaceful blue  
(Like twilight which faint stars gaze through),  
Wise with the years which no man knew.  
And first the music, as though the wings  
Of some blind angel were caught in the strings,  
Flutter'd with weak endeavour : anon  
The uncaged heart of music grew bold  
And cautiously loosen'd, length by length,  
The golden cone of its great under-tone,  
Like a strong man using mild language to one  
That is weaker, because he is sure of his strength.

## XX.

But once—and it was at the fall of the day,  
When she, if she closed her eyes, did seem  
To be wandering far, in a sort of dream,  
With some lost shadow, away, away,  
Down the heart of a golden land which she  
Remember'd a great way over the sea,  
There came a trample of horses and men ;  
And a blowing of horns at the Castle-Gate :  
Then a clattering noise ; then a pause ; and then,  
With the sudden jerk of a heavy weight,  
And a wrangling and jangling and clinking and  
clanking,  
The sound of the falling of cable and chain ;  
And a grumbling over the dewy planking  
That shriek'd and sung with the weight and strain.  
And the rough Seneschal bawl'd out in the hall,  
“The Earl and the Devil are come back again !”

## XXI.

Her heart stood still for a moment or more.  
Then suddenly tugg'd, and strain'd, and tore  
At the roots, which seem'd to give way beneath.  
She rush'd to the window, and held her breath.  
High up on the beach where the long black ships :  
And the brown sails hung from the masts in strips ;  
And the surf was whirl'd over and over them,  
And swept them dripping from stern to stem.  
Within, in the great square court below,  
Were a hundred rough-faced men, or so,  
And one or two pale-hair'd slaves  
Which the Earl had brought over the winter waves.

•  
XXII.

There was a wringing of horny hands ;  
And a swearing of oaths ; and a great deal of laughter ;  
The grim Earl growling his hoarse commands  
To the Warden that follow'd him growling after ;  
A lowing of cattle along the wet sands ;  
And a plashing of hoofs on the slippery rafter,  
As the long-tail'd black-maned horses each  
Went over the bridge from the gray sea-beach.

## XXIII.

Meanwhile the pale Lady grew whiter and whiter,  
As the poplar pales when the keen winds smite her :  
And, as the tree sways to the gust, and heaves  
Quick ripples of white alarm up the leaves,  
So did she shudder and shrink and reel  
At the casement—one quiver from head to heel  
Of whitest fear. For she heard below,  
On the creaking stairway loud and slow,  
Like drops that plunge audibly down from the thunder  
Into a sea that is groaning under,  
The heavy foot of the Earl as he mounted  
Step after step to the turret : she counted  
Step after step, as he hasten'd or halted ;  
Now clashing shrill through the archways vaulted ;  
Now muffled and thick ; now loud, and more  
Loud as he came near the chamber door.  
Then there fell, with a rattle and shock,  
An iron glove on the iron lock,  
And the door burst open—the Earl burst through it—  
But she saw him not. The window-pane,  
Far off, grew large and small again ;

The staggering light did wax and wane,  
 As, when through windy mist you view it,  
 Moonlight mix'd with shadowy rain ;  
 Till there came a snap of the heavy brain ;  
 And a slow-subsiding pulse of pain ;  
 And, to her, life darken'd into rest,  
 As the grim Earl press'd to his unloved breast  
 The dead face of the woman that he loved best.

## XXIV.

*“The Woman was fairer than she was wise :  
 But the Serpent was wiser than she was fair :  
 For the Serpent was lord in Paradise  
 Or ever the Woman came there.  
 But when Eden-gates were barr'd amain,  
 And the fiery sword on guard in the East,  
 The lion arose from a long repose,  
 And, quoth he, as he shook out his royal mane,  
 ‘Now I am the strongest beast.’  
 Had the Woman been wiser when she was queen  
 The Lion had never been king, I ween.  
 But ever since storms began to lower  
 Beauty on earth has been second to Power.”*  
 And this is the song that the Minstrel sung,  
 With the silver hair and the golden tongue,  
 Who sung by night in the grim Earl’s hall.  
 And they held him in reverence one and all.

## XXV.

But the Earl he bade them lift her lightly,  
 And bury her by the gray sea-shore,

Where the winds that blew from her own land nightly  
Might wail round her grave through the wild rocks  
    hoar.

So they lifted her lightly at dead of night,  
And bore her down by the long torch-light—  
Bore her down to the bleak thorn tree  
That, in midst of the loneliness, lean  
And pining, and pinch'd with pain  
(A blighted life, as her own had been),  
Stood, turning sick arms away  
From the dark and desolate sea,  
Back on the barren shore,  
As who, in his heart, should say,  
'I have watch'd and waited in vain,  
No more, O never more,  
Shall bloom, bruised heart, for thee  
The beauty that was of yore  
And never again can be.'  
Thus sullenly, four by four  
(While the stragglers hoarsely talking  
Follow'd by two and by three),  
The black pall-bearers bore  
Their dead weight grimly stalking.  
Lank-hair'd faces, sallow and keen,  
That burn'd out of the glassy pools between  
The splashing sands which, as they plunged through  
The coffin-lead weigh'd them down into ;  
And their feet, as they pluck'd them up, left pits  
Which the water oozed into and out of by fits—  
—And so to the deep-mouth'd bay's black brim,  
Where the pale priests, all white-stoled and dim,  
Lifted the cross and chaunted the hymn,

That her soul might have peace when her bones  
were dust,

And her name be written among the Just.  
The Warden walk'd after the Seneschal grim ;  
And the shock-headed Pages walk'd after him :  
And with mattock and spade a grave was made,  
Where they carved the cross, and they wrote her name,  
And, returning each by the way that he came,  
Their task being o'er, in a month or more,  
By night in the hall, and by day on the shore,  
With never a thought of their buried dame,  
And no heart of them sore for the days of yore,  
They laugh'd and quaff'd, and quarell'd and swore,  
And all things became again the same  
As all things had been before.

#### XXVI.

And again the swallow, that false new-comer,  
Flutter'd over the sea in the front of the Summer :  
A careless singer, as he should be  
That only skimmeth the mighty sea ;  
Dipp'd his wings as he came and went,  
And chirrup'd and twitter'd for heart's content,  
And built on the new-made grave. But when  
The Summer was over he flew back again.  
And the flowers decay'd in their dismal beds,  
And dropp'd off from their lean shanks one by one,  
Till nothing was left but the stalks and the heads,  
Clump'd into heaps, or ripp'd into shreds,  
To steam into salt in the sickly sun.  
And the cattle low'd late up the glimmering plain,  
Or dipp'd knee-deep, and splash'd themselves

In the pools spat out by the spiteful main,  
Wallowing in sandy dykes and delves :  
And the blear-eyed filmy sea did boom  
With his old mysterious hungering sound :  
And the wet wind wail'd in the chinks of the tomb,  
Till the weeds in the surf were drench'd and drown'd.  
And the Earl, as years went by, and his life  
Grew listless, took him another wife.  
But once a stranger came over the wave,  
And paused by the pale-faced Lady's grave.

## XXVII.

It was when, just about to set,  
A sadness held the sinking sun.  
The moon was a mere white mist as yet  
In the bland abundant blue :  
The Ave-Mary chime was done ;  
The grey-gown'd priest was passèd through  
The chapel porch of grassy stone ;  
And from the bell-tower lean'd the ringers ;  
And in the chancel paused the singers,  
With lingering looks, and claspèd fingers :  
And the day reluctantly turn'd to his rest,  
Like some untold life, that leaves exprest  
But the half of its hungering love ere it close :  
So he went sadly toward his repose  
Deep in the heart of the slumbrous waves  
Kindled far off in the desolate West.  
And the breeze sprang up in the cool sea-caves.  
The castle stood with his courts in shade,  
And all his toothèd towers imprest  
On the sorrowful light that sunset made—

Such a light as sleeps shut up in the breast  
Of some pining crimson-hearted rose,  
Which, as you gaze at it, grows and grows  
And all the warm leaves overflows ;  
Leaving its sweet source still to be guest.

## XXVIII.

Ere the moon was abroad, the owl  
Made himself heard in the echoing tower  
Three times, four times. The bat with her cowl  
Came and went round the lonely Bower  
Where dwelt of yore the Earl's lost Lady.  
There night after night, for years, in vain  
The lingering moon had look'd through the pane,  
And miss'd the face she used to find there,  
White and wan like some mountain flower  
In its rocky nook, as it paled and pined there  
Only known to the moon and the wind there.  
Lights flitted faint in the halls down lower  
From lattice to lattice, and then glow'd steady.

## XXIX.

The dipping gull : and the long gray pool :  
And the reed that shows which way the breeze  
blows cool,  
From the wide warm sea to the low black land :  
And the wave makes no sound on the soft yellow  
sand :  
But the inland shallows sharp and small  
Are swarm'd about with the sultry midge :  
And the land is still, and the ocean still

And the weeds in the rifted rocks at will  
Move on the tide, and sink or slide.  
And into the silent western side  
Of the heaven the moon begins to fall.  
But is it the fall of a plover's call  
That is answer'd warily, low yet shrill,  
From the sand-heapt mound and the rocky ridge?  
And now o'er the dark plain so wild and wide  
Falls the note of a horn from the old draw-bridge.

## XXX.

Who is it that waits at the castle-gates?  
Call in the minstrel, and fill the bowl.  
Bid him loose the great music and let the song roll.  
Fill the bowl.  
And first, as was due, to the Earl he bow'd:  
Next to all the Sea-chieftains, blithe friends of the  
Earl's:  
Then advanced through the praise of the murmuring  
crowd,  
And sat down, as they bade him, and all his black  
curls  
Bow'd o'er his harp, as in doubt which to choose  
From the melodies coil'd at his heart. For a man  
O'er some Beauty asleep for one moment might muse,  
Half in love, ere he woke her. So ere he began,  
He paused over his song. And they brought him,  
the Squires,  
A heavy gold cup with the red wine ripe in it,  
Then wave over wave of the sweet silver wires  
'Gan ripple, and the minstrel took heart to begin it.

## XXXI.

A harper that harps through mountain and glen,  
Wandering, wandering the wide world over,  
Sweetest of singers, yet saddest of men,  
His soul's lost Lady in vain to discover,  
What shall he liken his love unto ?  
Have you seen some cloud the sun sets through,  
When the lingering night is close at hand ?  
Have you seen some rose lie on the snow ?  
Or a summer bird in a winter land ?  
Or a lily dying for dearth of dew ?  
Some garden never sunshine warms  
Nor any tend ? some lonely tree  
That stretches bleak its barren arms  
Turn'd inland from the blighting sea ?  
Her cheek was pale : her face was fair :  
Her heart, he sung, was weak and warm :  
All golden was the sleepy hair  
That floated round about her form,  
And hid the sweetness breathing there.  
Her eyes were wild, like stars that shine  
Far off in summer nights divine :  
But her smile—it was like the golden wine  
Pour'd into the spirit, as into a cup,  
With passion brimming it up, and up,  
And marvellous fancies fair and fine.  
He took her hair to make sweet strings :  
He hid her smile deep in his song.  
This makes so rich the tune he sings  
That o'er the world 'twill linger long.

## XXXII.

There is a land far, far away from yours.  
And there the stars are thrice as bright as these.  
And there the nightingale strange music pours  
All day out of the hearts of myrtle trees.  
There the voice of the cuckoo sounds never forlorn  
As you hear it far off thro' the deep purple valleys.  
And the firefly dances by night in the corn.  
And the little round owls in the long cypress alleys  
Whoop for joy when the moon is born.  
There ripen the olive and the tulip tree.  
And in the sun broadens the green prickly pear.  
And the bright galingales in the grass you may see.  
And the vine, with her royal blue globes, dwelleth  
    there,  
Climbing and hanging deliciously  
By every doorway and lone latticed chamber,  
Where the damselfly flits, and the heavy brown bee  
Hums alone, and the quick lizards rustle and clamber.  
And all things, there, live and rejoice together,  
From the frail peach-blossom that first appears  
When birds are about in the blue summer weather,  
To the oak that has lived through his eight hundred  
    years.  
And the castles are built on the hills, not the plains.  
(And the wild windflowers burn about in the courts  
    there)  
They are white and undrench'd by the gray winter  
    rains.  
And the swallows, and all things, are blithe at their  
    sports there.

O for one moment, at sunset, to stand  
 Far, far away, in that dear distant land  
 Whence they bore her—the loveliest lady that ever  
 Crost the bleak ocean. Oh nevermore, never,  
 Shall she stand with her feet in the warm dry grasses  
 Where the faint balm-heaping breeze heavily passes,  
 And the white lotus-flower leans lone on the river !

## XXXIII.

Rare were the gems which she had for her dower.  
 But all the wild flowers she left behind her.  
 —A broken heart and a rose-roof'd bower.  
 O oft, and in many a desolate hour,  
 The cold strange faces she sees shall remind her  
 Of hearts that were warmer, and smiles that were  
     kinder,  
 Lost like the roses they pluck'd from her bower !  
 Lonely and far from her own land they laid her !  
 —A swallow flew over the sea to find her.  
 Ah cold, cold and narrow, the bed that they made  
     her !  
 The swallow went forth with the summer to find her.  
 The summer and the swallow came back o'er the sea,  
 And strange were the tidings the bird brought to me.

## XXXIV.

And the minstrel sung, and they praised and listen'd—  
 Gazed and praised while the minstrel sung.  
 Flusht was each cheek, and each fixt eye glisten'd,  
 And husht was each voice to the minstrel's tongue.  
 But the Earl grew paler more and more  
 As the song of the Singer grew louder and clearer,

And so dumb was the hall, you might hear the roar  
Of the sea in its pauses grow nearer and drearer.  
And . . . hush ! hush ! hush !  
O was it the wind ? or was it the rush  
Of the restless waters that tumble and splash  
On the wild sea-rocks ? or was it the crash  
Of stones on the old wet bridge up there ?  
Or the sound of the tempest come over the main ?  
—Nay, but just now the night was fair.  
Was it the march of the midnight rain  
Clattering down in the courts ? or the crash  
Of armour yonder ? . . . Listen again !

## XXXV.

Can it be lightning ?—can it be thunder ?  
For a light is all round the lurid hall  
That reddens and reddens the windows all,  
And far away you may hear the fall  
As of rafter and boulder splitting asunder.  
It is not the thunder, and it is not the lightning,  
To which the castle is sounding and brightening,  
But something worse than lightning or thunder ;  
For what is this that is coming yonder ?

## XXXVI.

Which way ? Here ! Where ?  
Call the men ! . . . Is it there ?  
Call them out ! Ring the bell !  
Ring the Fiend back to Hell !  
Ring, ring the alarm for mercy ! . . . Too late !  
It has crawl'd up the walls—it has burst in the gate—

It looks thro' the windows—it creeps near the hall—  
Near, more near—red and clear—  
It is here !  
Now the saints save us all !

## XXXVII.

And little, in truth, boots it ringing the bell.  
For the fire is loose on its way one may tell  
By the hot simmering whispers and humming up there  
In the oak-beams and rafters. Now one of the Squires  
His elbow hath thrust thro' the half-smoulder'd door—  
Such a hole as some rat for his brown wife might bore—  
And straightway in snaky, white, wavering spires  
The thin smoke twirls thro', and spreads eddying in  
gyres  
Here and there toucht with vanishing tints from the  
glare  
That has swathed in its rose-light the sharp turret  
stair.  
Soon the door ruin'd thro': and in tumbled a cloud  
Of black vapour. And first 'twas all blackness, and  
then  
The quick fork'd fires leapt out from their shroud  
In the blackness: and thro' it rush'd in the arm'd men  
From the courtyard. And then there was flying and  
fighting,  
And praying and cursing—confusion confounded.  
Each man, at wild hazard, thro' smoke ramparts  
smiting,  
Has struck . . . is it friend? is it foe? Who is  
wounded?

## XXXVIII.

But the Earl—who last saw him? Who cares? who  
knows?

Some one, no doubt, by the weight of his blows.  
And they all, at times, heard his oath—so they  
swore:—

Such a cry as some spear'd wild beast might give  
vent to,

When the lean dogs are on him, and forth with that  
roar

Of desolate wrath, the life is sent too.

If he die, he will die with the dying about him,  
And his red wet sword in his hand, never doubt him:  
If he live, perchance he will bear his new bride  
Thro' them all, past the bridge, to the wild sea-side.  
And there, whether he leave, or keep his wife still,  
There's the free sea round him, new lands, and new  
life still.

And . . . but ah, the red light there! And high up  
and higher

The soft, warm, vivid sparkles crowd kindling, and  
wander

Far away down the breathless blue cone of the night.  
Saints! can it be that the ships are on fire,  
Those fierce hot clots of crimson light,  
Brightening, whitening in the distance yonder?  
Slowly over the slumbrous dark  
Up from those fountains of fire spark on spark  
(You might count them almost) floats silent: and clear  
In the steadfast glow the great cross beams,

And the sharp and delicate masts show black ;  
While wider and higher the red light streams,  
And oozes, and overflows at the back.  
Then faint thro' the distance a sound you hear,  
And the bare poles totter and disappear.

## XXXIX.

Of the Earl, in truth, the Seneschal swore  
(And over the ocean this tale he bore)  
That when, as he fled on that last wild night,  
He had gain'd the other side of the moat,  
Dripping, he shook off his wet leatheren coat,  
And turning round beheld, from basement  
To cope, the castle swathed in light,  
And, reveal'd in the glare thro' My Lady's casement,  
He saw, or dreamed he saw, this sight—

## XL.

Two forms (and one for the Earl's he knew,  
By the long shaggy beard and the broad back too)  
Struggling, grappling, like things half human.  
The other, he said, he but vaguely distinguish'd,  
When a sound like the shriek of an agonized woman  
Made him shudder, and lo, all the vision was gone !  
Ceiling and floor had fallen thro',  
In a glut of vomited flame extinguish'd ;  
And the still fire rose and broaden'd on.

## XLI.

How fearful a thing is fire !  
You might make up your mind to die by water  
A slow, cool death—nay, at times, when weary  
Of pains that pass not, and pleasures that pall,

When the temples throb, and the heart is dreary,  
 And life is dried up, you could even desire  
 Thro' the flat green weeds to fall and fall  
 Half asleep down the green light, under them all,  
 As in a dream, while all things seem  
 Wavering, wavering, to feel the stream  
 Wind, and gurgle, and sound, and gleam.  
 And who would very much fear to expire  
 By steel, in the front of victorious slaughter,  
 The blithe battle about him, and comrades in call ?  
 But to die by fire !  
 O that night in the hall !

## XLII.

And the castle burn'd from base to top.  
 You had thought that the fire would never stop,  
 For it roar'd like the great north wind in the pines,  
 And shone as the boreal meteor shines  
 Watch'd by wild hunters in shuddering bands,  
 When wolves are about in the icy lands.  
 From the sea you might mark for a space of three  
     days,  
 Or fainter, or fiercer, the dull red blaze.  
 And when this ceased, the smoke above it  
 Hung so heavy not even the wind seemed to move it.  
 So it glared and groan'd, and night after night  
 Smoulder'd---a terrible beacon-light.

## XLIII.

Now the Earl's old minstrel—he that had sung  
 His youth out in those halls—the man beloved,  
 With the silver hair and the golden tongue,  
 They bore him out from the fire ; but he roved

Back to the stifled courts ; and there  
They watch'd him hovering, day after day,  
To and fro', with his long white hair  
And his gold harp, chaunting a lonely lay :  
Chaunting and changing it o'er and o'er,  
Like the mournful, mad, melodious breath  
Of some wild swan singing himself to death,  
As he floats down a strange land leagues away.  
One day the song ceased. They heard it no more.

## XLIV.

Did you ever an Alpine eagle see  
Come down from flying near the sun  
To find his eyrie all undone  
On lonely cliffs, where chance hath led  
Some spying thief the brood to plunder ?  
How hangs he desolate overhead,  
And circling now aloft, now under,  
His ruin'd home, screams round and round,  
Then drops flat fluttering to the ground.  
So moaning round the roofs they saw him,  
With his gleaming harp, and his vesture white :  
Going, and coming, and ever returning  
To those chambers, emptied of beauty and state,  
And choked with blackness and ruin and burning ;  
Then, as some instinct seemed to draw him,  
Like hidden hands, down to his fate,  
He paus'd, plunged, dropp'd for ever from sight ;  
And a cone of smoke and sparkles rolled up,  
As out of some troubled crater-cup.

## XLV.

As for the rest, some died; some fled  
Over the sea, nor ever return'd.  
But until to the living return the dead,  
And they each shall stand and take their station  
Again at the last great conflagration,  
Never more will be seen the Earl or the stranger.  
No doubt there is much here that's fit to be burn'd.  
Christ save us all in that day from the danger !

THE END.



